

Press Release: January 30, 2009

As the layoff scene worsens in the area the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic may be able to help those faced with the possibility of losing their health insurance. The Rockbridge Area Free Clinic, located at 25 Northridge Lane near Spencer Home Center and Woody's Chevrolet, provides health care, prescription medication and dental care to medically uninsured people in the Rockbridge area. The Free Clinic has been providing services to area residents since 1992 and is staffed with paid and volunteer health providers that provide some form of health related service five days per week. The Free Clinic partners with Carilion Stonewall Jackson Hospital and local health care providers to provide the same type of services most people expect from a private doctor's office.

"As people in the area worry about the economy and how it may affect them I want them to know that the Free Clinic is here to help with their health care needs. For those that are laid off, even temporarily, the Free Clinic can help bridge the gap and hopefully preserve some of their savings," explains Suzanne Sheridan, director of the clinic. The Free Clinic works through several medication programs that enable them to provide medication for most common health conditions that require routine medication regimens to manage, specifically conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and other chronic illnesses. "It is important that people with chronic illness maintain their prescribed prescription regimen. We have heard of people trying to stretch their medicines by taking less than their doctor ordered. This is not a good idea and it isn't necessary," explains Phyllis Miller, a pharmacist at the clinic.

People seeking health care services through the Free Clinic will need to participate in an eligibility interview. These interviews are conducted Monday morning, Wednesday afternoon and other times by appointment by calling 464-8700 ext 103. People are asked to bring current proof of income and their most recent tax return. Notice of unemployment may be used as income verification for clinic purposes. The eligibility criteria for the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic are that the person lives in the Rockbridge area, have no health insurance and meet certain income guidelines. The income guidelines for 2009 are:

Family size	Monthly Income	Annual Income
1	\$1805	\$21,660
2	\$2429	\$29,140
3	\$3052	\$36,620
4	\$3675	\$44,110
5	\$4299	\$51,580
6	\$4922	\$59,060
7	\$5545	\$66,540

Sheridan stresses that people that are recently unemployed that may have had incomes greater than the Free Clinic guidelines should not be concerned that

they will not qualify based on their past income. The Free Clinic considers the person's current income and situation when making eligibility determinations.

The Rockbridge Area Free Clinic is a private nonprofit organization and does not receive government mandated funding. Local individuals, civic organizations and church groups, the United Way and United Fund, various grants, and some local government funding financially support the clinic. The Free Clinic is considered a safety net health provider and is often the last resort for people with health care needs.

Photo: Dr. David Ellington helps a patient at the Free Clinic. In 2008 local medical care providers volunteered 788 hours at the Free Clinic while area specialty doctors provided 235 visits in their offices. Area dental volunteers contributed 638 volunteer hours.

