

EDITORIAL

Marin clinic needs and deserves help

FOR 35 YEARS, the Marin Community Clinic quietly has gone about its business — providing health care for many of the county's low-income and uninsured residents.

The clinic, with overcrowded facilities in Greenbrae and Novato, plays an increasingly important role in the county's health-care system.

During the last fiscal year it served 14,000 patients who made 50,000 visits. The number of patient visits has increased 50 percent since 2001.

A lack of capacity, unfortunately, forced the clinic to decline 5,000 requests for patient care in 2006.

The clinic, which has a long history of helping those who need help the most, now needs your help to meet the growing demand.

The Marin Community Clinic needs to raise \$9.8 million to open a new facility in San Rafael's Canal area next year and find a new spot for an expanded clinic in Novato.

The clinic's board and supporters already are two-thirds of the way there. The county has kicked in \$1.3 million and the Marin Community Foundation \$1 million. Other large donors include two families that have donated \$1 million and \$750,000 and are remaining anonymous for now.

This is an opportunity for residents, businesses and groups to show their support for a nonprofit that wants to be able to provide more health care for local families.

The planned Canal facility will do far more than just allow the clinic to see more patients. The location will be close to many residents who now have to travel to Greenbrae or Novato for care. It also will be a block from the county's planned \$72 million health complex. It will relieve the strain on the clinic's Greenbrae and Novato opera-

tions. It also will offer dental services, which is something the clinic has wanted to do for a long time.

The new facility will allow the clinic to handle 70,000 visits a year.

Kaiser and Sutter Health have been strong supporters of the clinic for many years, providing annual grants. They know how vital a role the clinic plays in the county's health-care system. Without such services, many low-income and uninsured residents would use the

emergency room at Marin General Hospital for treatment. That is expensive, inefficient and puts unnecessary strain on the ER.

The money raised will only be used

for new facilities. The clinic's operating budget has grown to \$8 million from \$4 million since 2002. Three-fourths of its revenue comes from reimbursement from public insurance and patient fees. Patients pay what they can. About half of the patients are eligible for Medi-Cal. Another 25 percent are eligible for other programs.

Most Marin doctors will not see Medi-Cal patients because of low reimbursement.

One in four patients at the clinic lack any insurance and pay reduced rates for treatment. Six out of seven seven of the clinic's adult patients have jobs but can't afford health insurance.

Simply put, the Marin Community Clinic fills a huge need. Thousands of children receive preventive care each year, improving the quality of their lives and providing large savings to society in the long run. Talk about a win-win.

We applaud those individuals and groups that have committed money to this campaign and we urge everyone who can help to do what they can to make this dream a reality.

HOW TO HELP

For information on donating to the Marin Community Clinic capital campaign, go to www.marinclinic.org or call 448-1546.