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SUN LIFE FAMILY HEALTH CENTER

Letter to the Editor

August 14, 2008, Casa Grande Dispatch

Sun Life Family Health Center: Your Health Care Home

By Travis J. Robinette, CEO, Sun Life Family Health Center

We regularly hear about bold new health insurance reform proposals that target coverage as a sure fix for what ails our health care system. What about access? As a health care administrator, I see first hand the critical importance of having a consistent place to go for care-- a health care home. A health care home means having a place to go to treat every day ailments-- the common cold, a headache, or a sore tooth, before these conditions get worse. But the reality is that 56 million people today don't have that option. According to a recent report by the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) and the Robert Graham Center, one in five Americans are "medically disenfranchised" or without health care options. They live in every state and nearly every county, representing all income levels and types of insurance coverage—and yet they all share one common struggle; no access to basic health care.

Fortunately, there is a solution, thanks to federally recognized Community Health Centers like Sun Life Family Health Center (Sun Life). We proudly serve as the health care home for 24,670 individuals, keeping them healthy and out of hospitals. Because our health care services are accessible and affordable to every one, regardless of insurance status, patients are able to get treatment before their health conditions become unmanageable. Not only do we save lives, we keep down health costs, and ease the burden on hospital emergency rooms, where \$18 billion a year is wasted on avoidable visits that could have been treated elsewhere.

Sun Life is a not-for-profit community health center providing health care to Casa Grande, Eloy, Coolidge, Mammoth, Maricopa, Oracle and San Manuel. The organization was founded 31 years ago as an outgrowth of the Arizona Job College that provided job training for migrant and seasonal farm-workers. From those humble beginnings, Sun Life has grown to become the largest primary care provider in Pinal County.

Our staff truly care about the people we serve. It has been our legacy since 1976, and we continue to believe that all people deserve access to high quality, comprehensive care. We are accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO). JCAHO accreditation is considered the Gold Standard in Health Care, and means that Sun Life has volunteered to undergo a challenging, comprehensive evaluation, making significant extra efforts to review and improve key factors that can affect the quality and safety of patient care. This accreditation demonstrates the quality of care we provide and that we are committed to continuous improvement.

We make a difference in the lives of our communities by providing not only family health care, OB/GYN and dental care, but offer other enabling services such as in-house application for medical assistance programs and sliding fee discounts. We also accept major insurance, AHCCCS and Medicare, so everyone can enjoy a one-stop shop to health and wellness.

Studies show that a health care home yields better health and lower health care costs but, more importantly, we see those results day after day in the health outcomes of our patients and the feedback we get from the community. In honor of National Health Center Week 2007, let's spread the word that one can find a quality health care home at Sun Life Family Health Center.