

Success in the Desert

BY RHODA WEISS

Despite being in what many might consider an unenviable competitive situation, St. Rose Dominican Hospital, in Henderson, NV, has a record of enviable success. Every year since 1990, its growth has been in the double digits, and the hospital expects even more dramatic growth in the future, as the population in its primary and secondary service areas is projected to increase 58 percent by 2006. To prepare, St. Rose plans to build a second hospital eight miles west of its current location.

The only not-for-profit, non-tax-supported, and religiously sponsored hospital in the greater Las Vegas area, St. Rose is surrounded by hospitals associated with well-known, for-profit national chains. St. Rose is a member of Catholic Healthcare West, but the nearest CHW hospital is in California, and the closest Catholic hospital is 300 miles away.

Despite these disadvantages, over the last four years St. Rose has increased its number of admissions by 77 percent. And St. Rose is one of the lowest-cost hospitals in the state, according to the Nevada Department of Human Resources.

Such success may be due in part to the strong community ties St. Rose Dominican has established over 50 years of serving Henderson and the neighboring communities. St. Rose's commitment to community healthcare is evident through a number of outreach programs, notably programs for seniors and children.



Clinic on Wheels (COW), a converted school bus, serves at-risk preschool children in the St. Rose community.



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HELPING HANDS OF HENDERSON

In 1995, St. Rose Dominican started the Artie J. Cannon Helping Hands of Henderson program, which recently received an outstanding community service award from the Nevada Governor's Conference on Aging. Named after a former hospital volunteer and community leader, the goal of the Helping Hands program is to improve the quality of life for people with disabling disorders, the chronically ill, and the frail elderly. Trained volunteers provide nonmedical services to clients, including companionship in the home, transportation to medical appointments, shopping, or running errands. Handyman services assist with minor home repairs and yard work, and a loan program helps provide medical equipment. A telephone network checks on homebound clients. Helping Hands also offers training courses for caregivers and assistance in locating other resources.

The popular program is sponsored by St. Rose Dominican Home Health Services; an interfaith advisory board coordinates the program direction and services. Funding for the program is primarily through grants, donations, and fund-raisers, and clients are asked to contribute a copayment based on their ability to pay.

"This community service program is another link in the continuum of care offered by St. Rose Dominican Hospital," explains Rod Davis, St. Rose president and CEO. "Our unique position as a nonprofit, Catholic organization means that we truly have an obligation and commitment to deliver quality, compassionate care, with the community's needs as our most important concern."

REACHING OUT TO CHILDREN

St. Rose Dominican also extends its community outreach efforts to children, through innovative collaborations and a fresh approach to familiar community concerns.

The Positive Impact program offers specialized
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medical care to underinsured or uninsured children. Covering all the schools in Henderson, the program works through school nurses and health aides, the hospital, primary care physicians, and other health providers to identify children in need and place them in the appropriate healthcare settings. Funded through cash donations and donated services from the hospital and its doctors, the program has assisted more than 500 students since its establishment in 1989.

To reach at-risk local preschool children, this year St. Rose inaugurated a mobile health program, Clinic on Wheels. Known as COW, the converted school bus, painted with white and black spots, enables physicians, dentists, and other healthcare providers to go into the community and screen children for health problems. This program is funded through a grant from CHW.

"Just as our Positive Impact program meets the medical needs of school-age children, Clinic on Wheels meets the needs of younger children, who may have potential health problems but whose parents lack the financial resources or means to obtain checkups for their children," says Sr. Vicki Dalesandro, director of St. Rose's Mission Services.

AN EDUCATIONAL ROLE

St. Rose Dominican is also committed to helping with the educational needs of children, and, with a local elementary school, the hospital developed the Positive Impact on Reading program to help students who are behind their peers academically but do not qualify for special education services. In this program, trained volunteers meet with students in grades 3 through 5 twice a week and help them with their reading skills. Volunteers, classroom, and reading teachers meet regularly to discuss the students' progress and make necessary adjustments. Deep bonds are often forged between student and tutor, making this a mutually rewarding program. □

 For more information, contact Debra Percell at 702-364-4507.

Basic and Advanced Units of Clinical Pastoral Education are being offered by Bon Secours-St. Francis Xavier Hospital in Charleston, South Carolina.

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For information about the Clinical Pastoral Education Program contact Sister Gemma Neville, Director of Pastoral Services, at (803) 402-1124 or fax (803) 402-1052.


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