



NEWS
For Immediate Release

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NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE ON THE RISE GIFT OF HEALTH SEEKS TO FILL GAP

SAN DIEGO, CA (October 4, 2010) - Gift of Health, a program of Community Health Improvement Partners, announces a new rebranding and outreach strategy in an effort to meet the increased needs for healthcare coverage and assist more families than ever. Launched in 2004, Gift of Health sponsors health insurance premiums for children with chronic conditions of low-income families in San Diego County.

According to a recent study from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, the number of uninsured families continues to grow throughout the state, including those in San Diego County. Although many of these families qualify for public children's healthcare programs, most are unable to keep their kids enrolled due to high premiums, co-payments and out of pocket expenses. Living without health insurance can negatively affect a child's health; failure to detect and treat health problems during this critical stage in a child's development can have significant impacts not only on their health, but their general well being and ability to thrive.

Most Gift of Health sponsored families are the "working poor," and unable to keep up with the real cost of living, including paying for health care. According to a 2008 study by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development about the real cost of living in San Diego, a single parent with two-school age children needs to earn \$22.23 an hour to earn enough to meet basic family needs. This is equivalent to between 275% and 325% of the federal poverty level. Gift of Health serves children of families whose incomes are less than 300% of the federal poverty level (FPL); 98% of sponsored families have been below the 250% FPL.

"As a single mother with two children, I started to have financial problems, but the last thing I wanted was to lose my daughter's insurance," states Norma A. Romo, San Diego. "I feel that for my family to be insured is the most important thing that I, as a mother, need to provide for them." "When I found out about the Gift of Health program, and how much they could help me, it gave me a sense of relief."

It can cost as little as \$180.00 to sponsor a child through Gift of Health; community contributions can help ensure that local families don't have to decide between making ends meet or getting their children the health care they need. To date the Gift of Health has provided assistance to 248 children.

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Gift of Health is lead by advisory and selection committees comprised of professionals from the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Sharp HealthCare, UCSD School of Medicine, 2-1-1 San Diego, San Diegans for Healthcare Coverage and San Diego Kids Health Assurance Network (SD-KHAN). Other partners include agencies that refer families to the Gift of Health. Current referral partners include Family Health Centers of San Diego, North County Health Services, (SD-KHAN), San Diego Unified School District, San Ysidro Health Center, Vista Community Clinic, Home Start, Inc., and Neighborhood Healthcare.

“Year after year, we have seen an increase in application volume and the experts predict the need will be greater than ever due to changes in many government programs,” states Kristin Garrett, CEO, Community Health Improvement Partners. “In this tough economy, more families will be turning to us for help which means our fundraising activities have never been more important.”

Community Health Improvement Partners

Community Health Improvement Partners is a San Diego based non-profit 501c3 voluntary collaboration of organizations deeply involved in health care improvement. CHIP members include hospitals, health plans, community clinics, community based organizations, physicians, universities and the County of San Diego. Our mission is to improve the health of all San Diegans through needs assessment, advocacy, education and programs best accomplished collectively.

For more information about the Gift of Health Program, please visit www.sdchip.org.

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