



Robert I. Bonar, Jr.

Every Child Deserves Proper Healthcare

Mobile health team cares for uninsured children in central Texas.

Of the 11 million uninsured children in the United States, more than 10 percent, or 1.4 million, live in Texas. Although uninsured children are concentrated along the Texas-Mexico border, the problem is far-reaching. In the 13-county region surrounding the central Texas city of Austin, more than 76,000 children have no health insurance. The majority of these children live with parents whose earnings are above the poverty level but not high enough to cover fundamental needs such as healthcare. Studies show that uninsured children often go without basic check-ups and frequently don't seek care until easily treatable problems become more serious. In addition, these untreated conditions often affect school performance.

Taking Healthcare on the Road

To help our community's children get the care they need, Children's Hospital of Austin—a member of the SETON Healthcare Network and the area's primary pediatric healthcare provider—established a partnership with the Austin Independent School District, which serves approximately 78,000 students. The Student Health Services Program is operated by a team of registered nurses and school health assistants who work closely with Austin ISD staff to provide care for students during school hours. This program also includes the Skippy Express Mobile Health Team, which

offers free medical services to Austin ISD children and their siblings, from birth to 18 years of age, who are uninsured or who have no doctor. Skippy Express is funded by the Children's Foundation, which solicits donations from area businesses and other community partners. The program is also part of the Children's Health Fund, a national network of pediatric mobile healthcare clinics.

The 40-foot Skippy Express clinic van makes regular visits to underprivileged areas with a high concentration of Hispanic and Vietnamese children. This on-site approach is successful because it goes beyond the traditional method of delivering healthcare. By bringing healthcare services to where people live, work, and go to school, we can overcome barriers—such as language, education, lack of transportation, and the inability to miss work—that prevent parents from obtaining proper healthcare for their children.

Made up of bilingual nurses and pediatric nurse-practitioners, the Skippy Express team works closely with school nurses and health assistants to identify children in need of medical services, including vision and hearing screenings, sports physicals, minor acute illness care, well-child examinations, immunizations, and referrals to primary, specialty, and mental healthcare

professionals. Navigating the healthcare system without health insurance can be difficult, so Skippy Express staff work with parents to help them understand the importance of obtaining consistent healthcare for the whole family, and they encourage parents to apply for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, or other community service benefits. In addition, the Skippy Express van features a Class D pharmacy, allowing children to obtain prescription medication immediately.

Celebrating Success

Last year, Skippy Express provided medical care and immunizations to approximately 4,000 children who might otherwise not have received any healthcare services at all. To understand the difference that our mobile health team makes, consider the story of a six-year-old girl who visited Skippy Express for a well-child examination. Because her mother was unable to care for her, the child had lived with her grandmother for several years before moving in with an aunt. During the examination, the nurse-practitioner noticed that the child was quite short for her age. The nurse-practitioner subsequently discovered that the girl had been born without a thyroid and was suffering from congenital hypothyroidism. Although the child's condition had been detected at birth and she had been given medication as an infant, her grandmother was unaware that the girl would need the medication for the rest of her life.

A consult visit was arranged with the Skippy Express pediatrician, who prescribed medication that was made available through an expense voucher program. In addition, the child was sent to an endocrinologist for assistance in managing her thyroid hormone imbalance.

ance. Skippy Express staff also helped the child's aunt apply for Medicaid benefits and find a primary care physician. Without this collaborative effort, there is no telling how long this child's severe medical condition would have gone untreated. Through the Skippy Express Mobile Health Team, Children's Hospital is fulfilling its mission to provide high-quality medical care to all, regardless of their ability to pay. ▲

Robert I. Bonar, Jr., is president and chief executive officer of Children's Hospital of Austin.

Children's Hospital of Austin
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POSTER SESSION Call for Innovations

Submit your entries for the 21st Annual Management Innovations Poster Session, to be held at ACHE's Congress on Healthcare Management, March 14-17, 2005, in Chicago. *Entries must be received by January 17, 2005.*

We're interested in your innovations and new ideas. Successful entries in previous years have included innovations in such areas as:

- Outcomes management
- Revenue raising
- Cost savings
- Billing and information systems
- Quality assurance
- Human resources
- Patient services
- Marketing/public relations
- Managed care
- Integrated delivery

The top innovations will be published in the 2005 Management Innovations booklet and displayed at the Congress on Healthcare Management. In addition, the participant presenting the innovation judged to be the most creative, broadly applicable, and useful to the healthcare management field will receive a Health Administration Press book of his or her choice. The award will be presented at the Malcolm T. MacEachern Memorial Lecture and Luncheon on Tuesday, March 15.

Take advantage of this opportunity to:

- Show the areas in which your organization excels
- Discuss your new programs with other leaders
- Earn participation in healthcare affairs credit toward advancement or recertification in ACHE

Please fill out the form below and mail your entry to:

Peter A. Weil, Ph.D., FACHE
 Vice President, Research and Development
 American College of Healthcare Executives
 1 N. Franklin St., Ste. 1700
 Chicago, IL 60606-4425

Fax to: (312) 424-9449
 E-mail to: pweil@ache.org

For more information, contact Peter Weil at (312) 424-9440 or via e-mail at pweil@ache.org.

NAME _____

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Please attach a one- or two-page explanation of the following:

1. Objective of program
2. Planning/research methods
3. Implementation methods
4. Results (e.g., cost savings, increased productivity, improved quality of care)

All individuals whose innovations are accepted will be expected to present their posters on Tuesday, March 15, 2005, between 7:15 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., as part of the poster session at the 2005 Congress on Healthcare Management in Chicago.



September 15, 2004

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Chief Executive Officer
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