

Free care clinic looks for funds for permanent building

By CHARLIE JOHNSON
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There is an old saying that goes, "Charity begins at home." For Dr. Kalpana Rajdev and Dr. Usha Doshi, a unique pair of caring physicians in Warren County, charity not only begins at home, but also in the Isha Care Free Clinic on Harrison Ferry Mountain. Isha Care offers uninsured workers and their families free primary care services with an emphasis on preventive care. Care is provided by volunteer, board-certified physicians and qualified nurses. Doctors Doshi and Rajdev currently operate the clinic out of the Harrison Ferry CIC building each Saturday morning from 8 a.m. until noon. Patients are seen

by appointment only. Clients can contact the clinic by calling 815-8500 or by e-mail at IshaCare@gmail.com. The biggest need right now is a permanent home for the clinic. The Harrison Ferry CIC building is a suitable environment, but setting up and taking down the clinic equipment each Saturday has been taking a toll on the two women. "We really need a permanent building," Dr. Doshi says. "Local doctors have been willing to donate equipment, but we have no place to put it." The doctors say they already have the land and a contractor has agreed to provide planning and construction services, but they still need the materials and funding to fulfill their dream of a permanent free clinic in Warren County.

"We think we could do it for around \$150,000 for the first phase," Doshi says, noting the clinic could use the services of a grant writer to help apply for government or private funding. "We know there is funding out there, but we just don't know where to go to get it." Charity is a word that turns up frequently in our language and our society. Though the basic tenet of charity is all about selfless love, some seem to feel it has a negative connotation when offered. "I don't take charity," they may say. But true charity has never equated to pity in word or deed. True charity comes from the heart and is never judgmental. With their work at Isha Care Clinic, doctors Doshi and Rajdev



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exemplify these ideals. Their goals are to provide for a need they have been aware of for some time, as Dr. Rajdev points out. "According to the U.S. Census figures published in 2008, 13 percent of Americans use Medicaid, and 15 percent are uninsured," Rajdev said. "That means approximately 30 percent of Americans need financial assistance for their health care. So we are talking about a huge percentage, one-third, practically, of the local population." Children and seniors represent a significant portion of that population, but Doshi says there is a segment that is largely ignored. "Even though the impression is that the children and the elder-

ly need more care, which is true, but they have government assistance," Doshi said. "There are children's programs, and the elderly are eligible for Medicare and Medicaid. The clinic, I think, is concentrating more towards age 19 to 63. They are the ones falling through the cracks. They don't have Medicare yet and they have all kinds of health issues." In addition, Doshi says the current economic situation is highlighting the unpleasant realities of this issue. "Sometimes they are recently unemployed," Doshi said. "And if you're a nursery worker when you lose your job, you also lose your home. So you have no home, no job and your doctor won't see you because you don't have any cash. So these are the patients we are seeing." Ironically, the doctors' specialties bookend the age range with the most need. "Dr. Doshi is a pediatrician and I am a geriatrician," said Dr. Rajdev. "So we are at both ends. We both could be very well be doing something different. She could be doing pediatrics, I could be doing geriatrics, but we feel that this is the population that is falling through the cracks because they don't have any programs for them. They are just simply ignored."



Charlie Johnson photo
Dr. Usha Doshi, co-founder of the Isha Care Free Clinic, speaks about the importance of providing health care to those without health insurance at the Town Hall Meeting with Congressman Lincoln Davis in August.

Doshi and Rajdev have found it really isn't free. The two generously donate their medical services, along with the other Isha Care volunteers, and the local business and medical community has helped with equipment and supplies, but operating the free clinic has still proven difficult financially.

As a result, a good portion of their time has been dedicated to raising funds, one of the vagaries of any charitable organization. Doshi, in particular, has been "pounding the pavement" talking to whomever she can to try and find financial support for their clinic. For more information on the Isha Care Free Clinic, or to make a donation, offer volunteer services or help with funding the building program, contact Dr. Doshi or Dr. Rajdev at 931-815-8500, or by e-mail at IshaCare@gmail.com. And remember, charity begins at home.



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