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In addition to screenings, the Arkansas Minority Health Commission's Mobile Health Unit provides patients with health education, makes referrals to local care providers and partners with foodbanks statewide to offer even more support to the communities they serve.

Heal on wheels: Mobile health clinics reach Arkansas' underserved

By Dalton Thompson

Health care costs are the leading cause of bankruptcies in the United States. Rural communities, where access to care can be limited, are feeling the brunt of a crisis of access and affordability. In Arkansas, almost 250,000 people do not have health insurance. With rising costs and public health crises becoming more common, Arkansans are delaying care to save money. Luckily, some organizations have decided that it doesn't have to be this way—and they're coming to a town near you!

The Arkansas Minority Health Commission (AMHC) launched their Mobile Health Unit in 2019. Their mission is to provide underserved and minority communities with no-cost preventive health-care services like screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, A1C and HIV. The AMHC strives to provide equitable access to health care for communities who have been historically underserved, but anyone can utilize its services. In addition to screenings, the Mobile Health Unit provides

patients with health education, makes referrals to local care providers and partners with foodbanks statewide to offer even more support to the communities they serve.

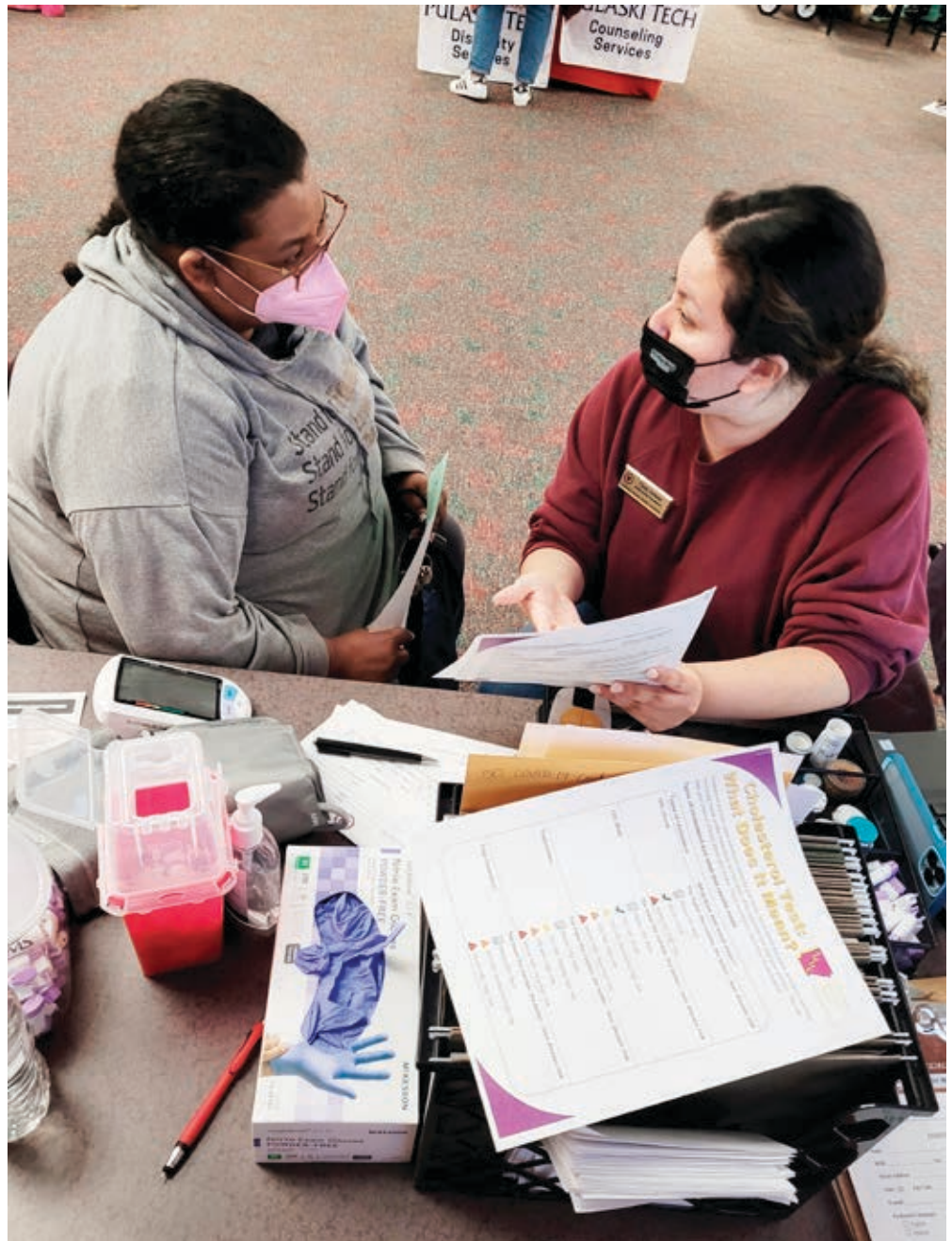
"The Arkansas Minority Health Commission's Mobile Health Unit serves as a vessel to promote health and prevent diseases and conditions that are most prevalent among minority populations," said AMHC's Mobile Health Unit coordinator, Cindy Arreola. "Our team travels the state of Arkansas, meeting people where they are and providing free services to bridge the gap for those who do not have easy access to preventative health care."

In addition to AMHC's Mobile Health Unit, Arkansans in the eastern region of the state have access to the Delta Care-A-Van, a service of the New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine (NYITCOM) at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. The Care-A-Van program strives to make a difference in underserved communities in the Mississippi Delta.

Like AMHC’s Mobile Health Unit, NYITCOM’s Delta Care-A-Van specializes in preventive care screenings, health education, referrals to local care providers or other social services, and health education programs. Since 2018, the Care-A-Van has been working to address a shortage of physicians in the Delta region.

According to Delta Population Health Institute Executive Director Dr. Brookshield Laurent, NYITCOM’s program has teamed up with medical and nursing school programs to connect students and residents to the communities who need their healing hands. “The Delta Care-A-Van serves to provide preventative care and mental health screenings in rural communities in the Delta in partnership with health care systems,” she said. “It offers inter-professional educational opportunities with health professional students to increase the health care workforce in rural communities. The Delta Care-A-Van also serves as an entry point to provide capacity building through cross-sector collaborations to address social determinants of health.”

The AMHC Mobile Health Unit and the NYITCOM Delta Care-A-Van join an estimated 2,000 mobile health clinics in the United States that are bringing real change to our communities, and at lower costs than traditional healthcare services. Mobile Health Map, a collaborative mobile clinic resource (www.mobilehealthmap.org) reports that, on average, the cost of a visit to a mobile clinic is about \$155, but the savings are estimated to be about \$1,800 when compared to traditional medical services. Data shows that mobile clinics are saving patients and communities a lot of money: For every dollar invested in a mobile clinic, \$12 is saved, a 12-to-1 return-on-investment. Sixty percent of patients served by mobile clinics are uninsured, so these savings have a real impact in our local communities.



Since 2019, the Arkansas Minority Health Commission’s Mobile Health Unit has been providing underserved and minority communities with no-cost preventive health-care services, such as screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, A1C and HIV.

Clinics like the AMHC Mobile Health Unit and the NYITCOM Delta Care-A-Van are great examples of how we can create healthier communities across the Natural State without bankrupting Arkansans. For more information, please visit www.arminorityhealth.com and www.nyit.edu/arkansas/delta_care_a_van.



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