

# Celebrating One Year of West Valley Service

This fall marks the one-year anniversary of Mission of Mercy's Avondale clinic and, for Pastor of the First Southern Baptist Church Jack Marslender and member of Mission of Mercy's Arizona Leadership Council, the milestone represents more than 12 months of service; the anniversary represents his congregation's willingness to serve, and the possibility of continued growth in the years to come.

## A Shared Dream

Big dreams for a health care clinic began nearly three years ago for the First Southern Baptist Church. "Our members have always been committed to providing people with the spiritual guidance and support necessary to live the most healthy and fulfilling lives possible," says Marslender. "We made a commitment to be more involved in our community, but we knew we couldn't do something as extensive as an on-site health care clinic without a partner."

At the same time, Mission of Mercy Executive Director Catherine Amiot set her sights on a West Valley clinic location and was working hard to engage key stakeholders in bringing that dream to life. "No one questioned the need for health care services for the uninsured and underinsured," says Amiot. "Feedback from the community, other agencies and hospital emergency rooms, all pointed to an Avondale clinic location."



## Partnering to Serve

Together, with the help of community partners, Mission of Mercy made plans for a West Valley expansion that would work out of the First Southern Baptist Church and enlist the church's volunteers to help with clinic operations. "It was an exciting time," says Amiot. "There are enough resources to prevent people from falling through the cracks in our health care system when providers and service agencies come together."

"When we arrived for the first day of the clinic last November, we did not know what to expect," recalls Marslender. "By 7 a.m. when there was a line out the door we realized that the need was so much greater than we could have ever imagined," recalls Marslender. He explains that both he and the clinic volunteers understood quickly that they were in over their heads, but they were all willing to try. "People stepped up and were willing to serve, showing God's love in a real and practical way."

## Snapshot of Success

Since opening its doors in November 2011 to serve patients every other Monday, the West Valley clinic has averaged 60 patient visits each clinic day. Although in recent months medical staff report seeing a sharp increase in demand from 13 West Valley cities. "More than 30 volunteers from First Southern Baptist Church support the day-to-day on-site patient care at the clinic. With increased traffic at the West Valley clinic, the nonprofit has increased patients

visits by 30% and expects to surpass 3,330 patient visits Valleywide by year's end. "Our greatest need is for general and primary care medical doctors willing to volunteer at the clinic and specialty care doctors who can see patients pro bono in their offices so we can refer patients requiring additional medical attention," says Mission of Mercy Medical Director Brad Smith, N.M.D.

## Building Capacity

When asked what his hopes are for the clinic's future, Marslender explains that he's setting his sights on a an additional clinic day. "We have reached capacity. Two days per month is not enough. We need another day or else we'll have to start turning people away."

Amiot couldn't agree more. "This August we signed a letter of agreement with Banner Estrella Medical Center for \$20,000 in pro bono specialized imaging services, signaling its participation in our *Compassionate Partner Network* of hospitals providing specialty care for clinic patients requiring services above what we can provide. These are the sort of partnerships that will help us better serve our community in the years to come."



Jack Kurtz 2011



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