

# Good Shepherd clinic taking care of county's flock

By Jennifer Brown

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(Seventh in a series about United Way-funded agencies in Laurens County.)



Every Thursday night for the last 13 years, you can find good Samaritans of Laurens County helping out their friends and neighbors in need of medical care.

The Good Shepherd Free Medical Clinic, which provides medical care to uninsured residents of Laurens County, had 4,500 visits last year and dispensed 13,000 free prescriptions.

The free prescription program would not be possible without the United Way of Laurens County, says Good Shepherd Executive Director Cindy Perry.

"United Way gives us a third of our actual cash budget for medical supplies and prescriptions," says Perry of the current \$34,000 annual allocation. Prior to the opening of Good

Shepherd in 1994, people in need of prescription assistance often called on the United Way.

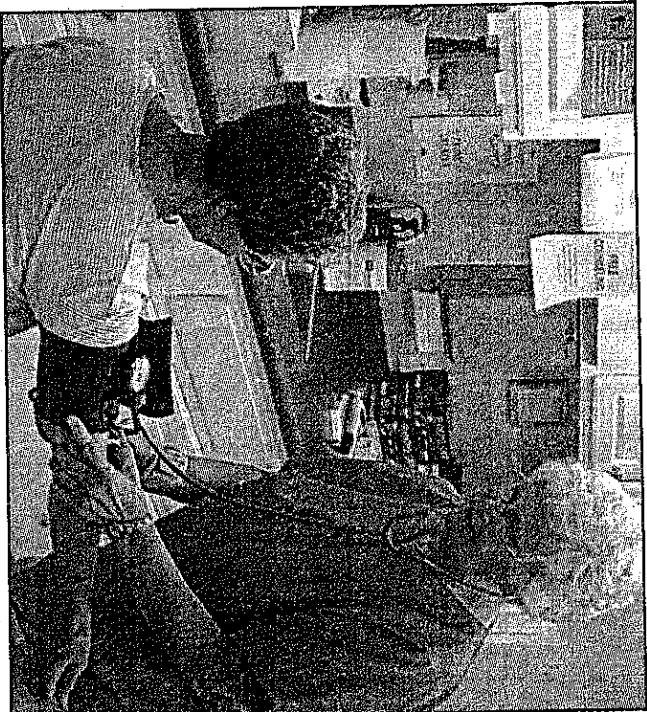
Considering the average price of a prescription is \$55, the United Way would be able to pay for about 545 prescriptions annually with the \$34,000 allocated to Good Shepherd.

"Good Shepherd provides over 13,000 prescriptions with the same money, using volunteer help and (partnerships with) drug companies. That's pretty good evidence of getting your money's worth when donating to United Way," said Perry.

The \$34,000 allocation is the United Way's largest allocation to a single partner-agency.

United Way Executive Director Caroline Thomas says having Good Shepherd as a United Way partner-agency is a win-win for the entire county.

"Those guys have impacted so many different agencies by



**Good Shepherd:** Lucille Dietz, RN, takes the blood pressure of a patient at the Good Shepherd Free Medical Clinic recently. The clinic is able to provide 13,000 free prescriptions a year to residents of Laurens County, thanks in large part to support from the United Way of Laurens County.

providing the services they do. It has been a wonderful association to have," Thomas said.

The clinic gave out roughly

\$1.3 million in total medical care last year. A large portion of that is the time donated by Laurens County's medical profes-

## Shepherd

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150 percent of the federal poverty level.

"Most of the patients make a little too much to be on Medicaid, but don't make enough to afford insurance or have jobs

that provide insurance," Perry said.

In addition to routine patient visits, the clinic also hosts a monthly gynecological clinic for women, a new monthly eye clinic in partnership with the Joanna Lions Club and a dia-

betic education program one night per month with staff provided by the hospital and testing strips and glucometers furnished by Good Shepherd.

The strips and other medical supplies used at the clinic are purchased with funds received

sionals, including 15 doctors, 12 pharmacists and 20 nurses.

The current roster of 125 volunteers is evidence of how far the clinic has come since the days of 50 or so volunteers working out of donated space in the county's Health Department.

And with an average of eight to 10 new patients seen every week, the clinic soon outgrew its location. Today, the clinic operates out of a newer building owned by the Laurens County Health Care System in the county's professional park and built in 2001.

The level of need the clinic sees has also brought about expanded services.

"We have been seeing patients on Monday and Wednesday mornings in addition to our Thursday evening times," Perry said. "Lately, we've been seeing a lot of really sick people."

To be eligible for Good Shepherd services, patients must be residents of Laurens County, have no medical insurance and have a household income below

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from the United Way of Laurens County.

"I like to tell people, United Way is like the search engine of critical needs in Laurens County," says Perry. "If we didn't have the United Way, we wouldn't be open."