

Posted on Fri, Mar. 06, 2009

MOM comes to Riverbank

By Leslie Albrecht



Students, and other community members enter to tour the "MOM" or mobile medical healthcare center. Step by Step Community Youth at Riverbank High School helped spearhead the effort to get the Golden Valley mobile health center and held a ribbon cutting ceremony Thursday morning March 5, 2009. (Debbie Noda/The Modesto Bee) - Modesto Bee - Debbie Noda

RIVERBANK — A new kind of bus pulled up at Riverbank High School on Wednesday morning, not the long yellow kind that students ride. The 60-foot bus is a mobile health clinic that will provide medical care to anyone in the community, with a focus on caring for teenagers.

A group of youth activists called Riverbank Step by Step helped bring the Medical Outreach Mobile clinic to Riverbank's campus. The teen approached Merced-based Golden Valley Health Centers about providing the mobile clinic. They surveyed their peers about their health care needs and met with the Riverbank Unified School District about the project, said Lisa Baladad, marketing coordinator for Golden Valley.

Now the teenagers will see the fruits of their labor every Tuesday, when the mobile clinic parks at the high school from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. On Fridays, the clinic will park at California Avenue Elementary School, also from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. The mobile unit is expected to see about 22 patients a day, said Baladad.

The bus is essentially a doctor's office on wheels. It features a small waiting area and two exam rooms. Patients can get annual physical exams as well as all the services a family doctor would provide. The clinic accepts Medi-Cal, Medicare, Healthy Families and most private insurance. Discounts are available for low-income patients.

A mobile clinic is a fast, low-cost way of providing health care, said Christine Noguera, deputy chief executive officer of Golden Valley Health Centers. It hopes to expand the clinic into a five-day-a-week service and then into a permanent location in Riverbank.

"If we get great demand for services, we're going to outgrow it," said Noguera.

Bee staff writer Leslie Albrecht can be reached at 578-2378 or lalbrecht@modbee.com.