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Ten years and rolling strong: New Caring Van steers toward free OKC immunizations

Oklahoma City, Okla. (April 20, 2010) — With 10 years of Oklahoma City service in the rearview mirror, the Oklahoma Caring Foundation, Inc. is revving up to use its new Caring Van. This new addition will play a large role in providing free immunizations to Oklahoma City area families. The vehicle — funded by the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, Wal-Mart Foundation and Walton Family Foundation (through the efforts of Arvest Bank) — will be revealed at 10 a.m. on April 20 at Oklahoma City Educare, 500 S.E. Grand Boulevard.

The Caring Van has been the primary focus of the Oklahoma Caring Foundation in Oklahoma City for the past 10 years. The program has provided more than 150,000 immunizations and is a proud contributor to Oklahoma's immunization efforts. It makes health care more accessible by eliminating the barriers of inconvenient clinic hours, long wait times, transportation and cost.

"The Caring Vans have been a very successful grassroots approach to meeting the health care needs of at-risk families," said Beverly Binkowski, executive director, Oklahoma Caring Foundation. "We literally meet these families in the communities where they live and work."

The new vehicle will support the Caring Van staff in providing consistent, year-round services to child care centers, schools and community events throughout the state. In addition to a new exterior design, added storage and an updated floor plan, the new van will provide its registered nursing staff with the latest amenities.

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The vehicle will serve the Oklahoma City metropolitan area and replace a 11-year-old van currently in operation. "This new van will help us continue to connect Oklahoma City area residents to the resources they need to eliminate the barriers of inconvenient clinic hours, long wait times, transportation and cost," Binkowski said.

"We knew we had a problem with children being behind on immunizations, but we did not quite know what to do to make sure parents follow-up on past due shots," said Cathy Harrelson, El Reno WCD WIC Counselor. "Since the Oklahoma Caring Van has been providing immunization services at the WCD WIC Program our rates of immunization have greatly improved."

All Caring Van immunizations are administered by a registered nurse from the city/county health department at child care facilities, schools and community events. Each child's immunization records are entered into the Oklahoma State Immunization Information System, where they remain portable.

The Oklahoma Caring Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization administered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma. It was established in 1994 to improve the health of Oklahoma children through vaccinations and access to basic health care.

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