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## Free Care for the Uninsured

(December 17, 2009) During the busy cold and flu season, residents have a place to turn for free, urgent, non-emergency medical care.

“We know that the economy is presenting challenges for many in our community,” said Samantha Pearl, executive director of Community HealthCare Connections. “The Nursing Clinic of Battle Creek is open and ready to serve those who have lost a job, are uninsured or are struggling financially to make ends meet.”

The Nursing Clinic is part of Community HealthCare Connections, an organization devoted to connecting uninsured and underinsured vulnerable individuals to urgent medical care and basic health, navigation, referral and advocacy services. The Nursing Clinic is located in downtown Battle Creek at 34 Green Street.

“If you have a sore throat and cough, but no primary care doctor,” said Pearl, “you should come to the Nursing Clinic. If you are worried about bringing your spouse to the doctor because you are low on funds, the Nursing Clinic will see you for no charge. In addition, we’ll try and find you a medical home for the future, so you can always access medical care when it’s needed.”

Beginning January 4, Suzanne Kirk will join the staff of the Nursing Clinic, providing full-time clinical support. She has 12 years of experience working as a nurse practitioner, and will round out the staffing of the clinic during a typically busy time for seasonal illnesses.

“The Nursing Clinic is open and ready to serve patients in Battle Creek,” said Pearl. “We have a medical provider available more than 40 hours each week, and our doors are open to those who find themselves in both medical and financial need.”

Another program of Community HealthCare Connections is the Prescription Drug Access Program (PDAP), with offices on the Third Floor of the Toeller Building, 190 E. Michigan Avenue. Working with a PDAP enrollment specialist, eligible residents can access no cost medications through the major pharmaceutical companies’ charity care programs. In order to better serve its clients, PDAP has

recently added walk-in hours Monday through Thursday from 1-4:30 PM as well as by appointment in the mornings.

“We helped our clients access more than \$4 million in free prescriptions in 2009,” said Pearl. “There’s no need for a struggling patient to choose between medicine and food. We are able to help access free prescriptions for many people in our community.”

Community HealthCare Connections is the umbrella organization resulting from the merger of the Nursing Clinic of Battle Creek and Calhoun Health Plan. CHC links uninsured and underinsured vulnerable individuals to urgent medical care and basic health, navigation, referral and advocacy services. The Nursing Clinic of Battle Creek provides free, urgent, non-emergency care to those in medical and financial need. Calhoun Health Plan provides access to primary medical and dental care as well as access to healthcare referral & advocacy services.

For more information about Community HealthCare Connections or any of its programs, call 969-6494.

