



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **SUMTER FAMILY HEALTH CENTER CELEBRATES NATIONAL HEALTH CENTER WEEK 2009**

**EVENTS SPOTLIGHT ACCESS AND QUALITY CARE, HERE AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

Sumter, South Carolina – Sumter Family Health Center – the place “Where Access and Quality Care Begin” for people in our community – joins the rest of America’s more than 1,200 Community Health Centers today in kicking off **National Health Center Week 2009** (August 9-15, 2009).

The theme of the week, “Where Access and Quality Care Begin,” highlights health centers’ roles as “health care homes” for some 18 million people in America, providing primary and preventive care and a range of services. Sumter Family Health Center serves 10,800 patients in our community each year – a number that is increasing due to layoffs and cutbacks during the economic downturn. Health center patients pay on an income-based sliding fee scale; no one is turned away, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

To celebrate National Health Center Week locally, the Sumter Family Health Center, located at 1278 N. Lafayette Drive in Sumter and 25 E. Clark Street in Pinewood, has planned several activities to give back to the community. Throughout the week, the staff will be giving the patients special treats to say ‘Thank you for their loyal support’ as well as registering each patient for daily drawings for chances to win prizes donated by employees and community sponsors. The center will also collect non-perishable food for a Food Drive at the center to donate to a local charity.

On Tuesday, August 11, SFHC will participate in the Sumter Prevention Team Community Resource Fair from 3:30 to 6:00 pm at the South Hope Center. This is an opportunity to educate teachers, school personnel and the public about the services the center has to offer children and families in Sumter County.

On Wednesday, August 12, SFHC will provide FREE Blood Pressure Screenings and education for the public from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Piggly Wiggly at 114 E. Calhoun St in Sumter.

“Everyone should have the choice of a Community Health Center as their health care home,” said Annie Geddings, Executive Director of SFHC. “We provide high-quality services that emphasize primary care and wellness so that families can stay healthy and out of hospitals. **National Health Center Week** is a time to

spread the message that we need to invest in an accessible and affordable community health system that can reduce disparities, improve health and achieve cost savings.”

Events marking **National Health Center Week 2009** include health fairs, media events and visits by local, state and national leaders to health centers in their communities. Two days are set aside to focus on special populations: Health Care for the Homeless Day will be observed on Wednesday, August 12, and Farmworker Health Day will be observed on Thursday, August 13.

The spotlight comes at a time when the American Recovery or Reinvestment Act (ARRA), or the federal economic stimulus bill, has made increased access to care possible. Community Health Centers were among the first recipients of stimulus funding; \$338 million in so-called Increased Demand for Services grants will enable health centers to provide quality care to an additional 2.1 million patients over the next two years.

Long-term, health centers are envisioned as a major part of the solution for providing care to the 60 million people in the United States who are – according to a report by the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) – medically disenfranchised. A health center plan called *ACCESS for All America* has the goal of preserving, strengthening and expanding health centers, ultimately providing affordable, high-quality care to all medically underserved.

For more information, visit [www.healthcenterweek.org](http://www.healthcenterweek.org).

The nation’s network of more than 1,200 Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) serves more than 18 million people through 7,000 sites located in all of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. More information about America’s Health Centers is available from the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) and the website [www.nachc.com](http://www.nachc.com).

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