

# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 11, 1993

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## **Mobile Health Clinic To Increase Health Care Access to Rural Southwest Florida**

PORT CHARLOTTE — A consortium of non-profit organizations, with support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, has developed a health care outreach program which increases medical access for thousands of migrants and rural Floridians in Hardee, Highlands, DeSoto, Glades and Charlotte counties.

The consortium will use a mobile medical van armed with health professionals and supplies to travel to rural areas and reach at least 7,200 patients each year. Called Care A VAN, the mobile unit will provide medical care, prenatal examinations, limited emergency services, early diagnosis and treatment.

"The Care A VAN will increase access to health care by delivering primary medical care in a timely fashion by decreasing the need for emergency treatment," said David Neugent, chief executive officer for Bon Secours-St. Joseph Hospital in Port Charlotte and chairman of the consortium.

Jim Van Wagner, Blue Cross and Blue Shield manager of facility contracting in the West Coast region, said the insurance company became interested in the mobile clinic when studies revealed the high infant mortality rate and disease statistics. "This novel approach to health care provides preventive medical care to a community who needs these basic services," Van Wagner said. "The Care A VAN gives us an opportunity to educate the public about the importance of preventive medicine."

The consortium is composed of the following organizations: Bon Secours-St. Joseph Hospital, Port Charlotte; Walker Memorial Hospital, Avon Park; Catholic Charities-Diocese of Venice, Venice; Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services Districts 6 and 8; Florida Rural Health Services, Sebring, Avon Park, Wauchula, Frostproof; De Soto Memorial Hospital, Arcadia; and Lake Placid Medical Center, Lake Placid.

Care A VAN, with a staff of 6 and supplies, will provide the following services: triage, basic emergency treatment, general primary care, prenatal care, physical exams, screenings, immunizations, x-rays, blood work and disbursement of pharmaceuticals and educational

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Care A VAN/BCBSF  
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materials about workplace injuries and personal health. The consortium hopes to annually enlist at least 400 women into early prenatal care and provide required immunizations to at least 800 children of pre-school age.

Prenatal care and education is an important component to the mobile unit. Studies show that rural Floridians have significantly reduced access to obstetrical/prenatal care: There are 20 obstetricians per 100,000 women of child-bearing age in rural counties, compared to 63 per 100,000 in the metro counties.

Neugent said the mobile van will provide the initial contact and will refer patients to county public health units or community health centers for follow-up care. "Some patients will need non-emergency hospitalization for specialized care, and funding for further care will be provided by hospitals in the consortium," he said. Neugent added that physicians and other non-profit hospitals in Southwest Florida will be recruited to accept referrals from the mobile van for patients requiring further consultation/hospitalization. "No one will be turned away because of inability to pay," Neugent said.

Catholic Charities will identify populations and locations with health care needs, and establish dates and times for the van to visit. This week the van is scheduled to appear in Wauchula, Moore Haven, Bowling Green, Arcadia, Murdock and south Highlands County.

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## Fact Sheet: Care A VAN Mobile Health Clinic

- Care A VAN is a mobile medical van armed with health professionals and supplies that will travel to rural areas and hopefully reach 7,200 patients each year. A consortium of non-profit organizations, with support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, developed the health care outreach program to increase access to health care for thousands of migrants and rural Floridians in the counties of Hardee, Highlands, DeSoto, Glades and Charlotte.
- Rural Floridians have significantly reduced access to obstetrical/prenatal care. In Florida's rural counties, there are 20 obstetricians per 100,000 women of child-bearing age, compared to 63 per 100,000 in the metro counties.
- Florida's rural counties have a 46 percent higher rate of infant death than metro counties. Numerous data prove that rural poor counties have a significantly higher percent of high risk newborns than do metropolitan counties.
- A 1992 study of migrants in Immokalee, Fl yielded these results: 45 percent were tested positive for tuberculosis, 5 percent were HIV positive and 8 percent were reactive to syphilis
- It is documented that the life expectancy of a farm worker is 20 years less than that of the average American.
- There are fewer physicians per capita in the five-county area serviced by Care A VAN than other areas of Florida.

### Care A VAN Facts

- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is a funding source for the van and its equipment.
- MOEX Corporation of Oregon designed the mobile health unit
- Dimensions: Overall length: 34 feet, 6 inches; Overall width: 8 feet; Overall height: 11 feet, 3 inches; Two exam rooms: 50 square feet each
- Van includes x-ray machine and area; sound booth; waiting area; restroom; two exam rooms; and expandable units that fold into sides of vehicle when traveling.
- Care A VAN will have the following staff: program director, advanced registered nurse practitioner, community health nurse, radiology technician/ computer manager, medical technologist/ health educator, two social workers and secretary. Volunteer family practitioners Dr. Robert Moreland of Venice and Dr. Omar Perez of Port Charlotte will work the van.

## **Description of Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony**

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, May 11, 1993, 11:30 a.m.

**Where:** Bon Secours-St. Joseph Health Center, 21297 Olean Boulevard, Port Charlotte — Front parking lot near main entrance

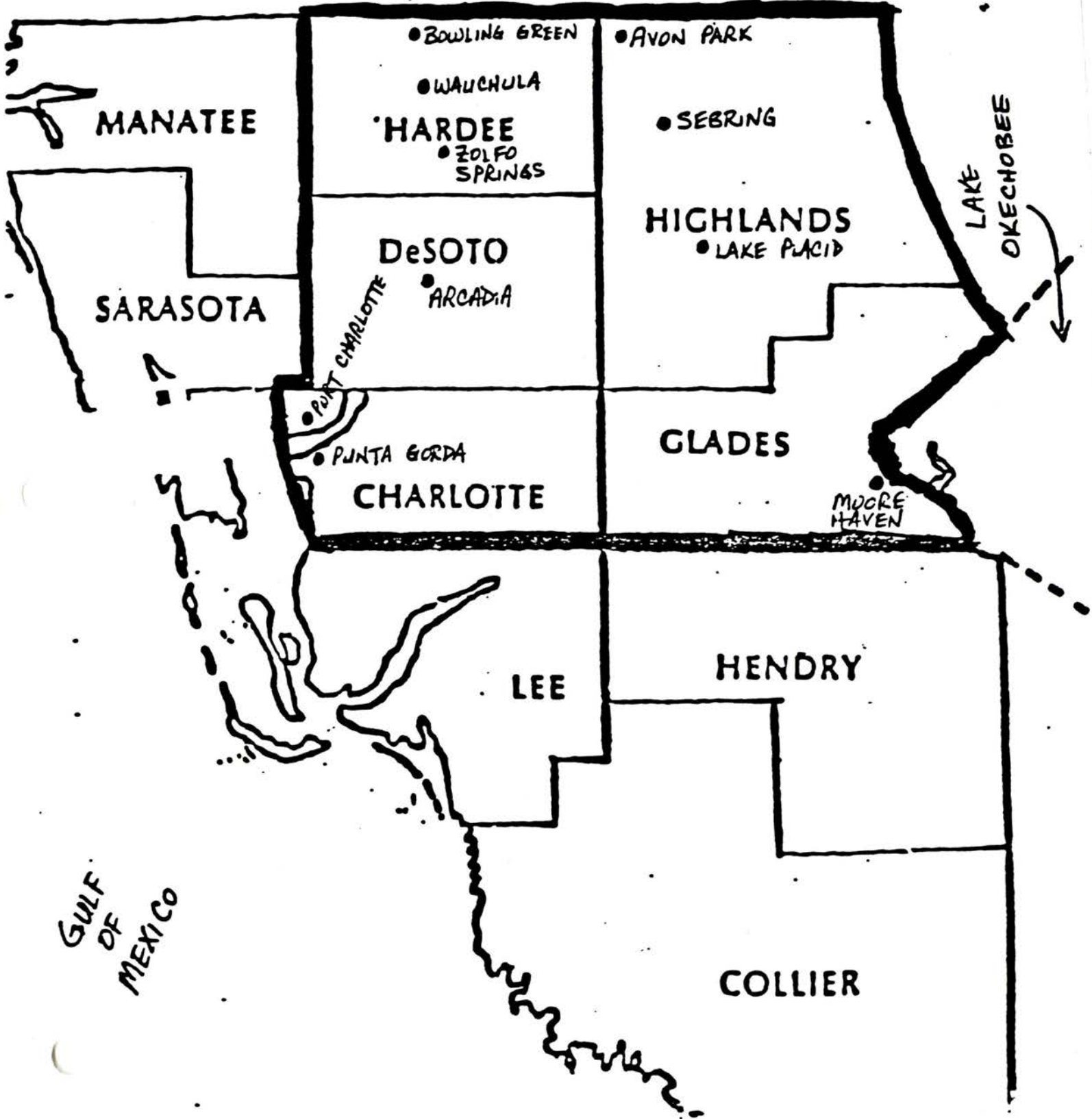
**Items Needed:** Red ribbon, 4 scissors, podium and microphone, media kits, banners from consortium members

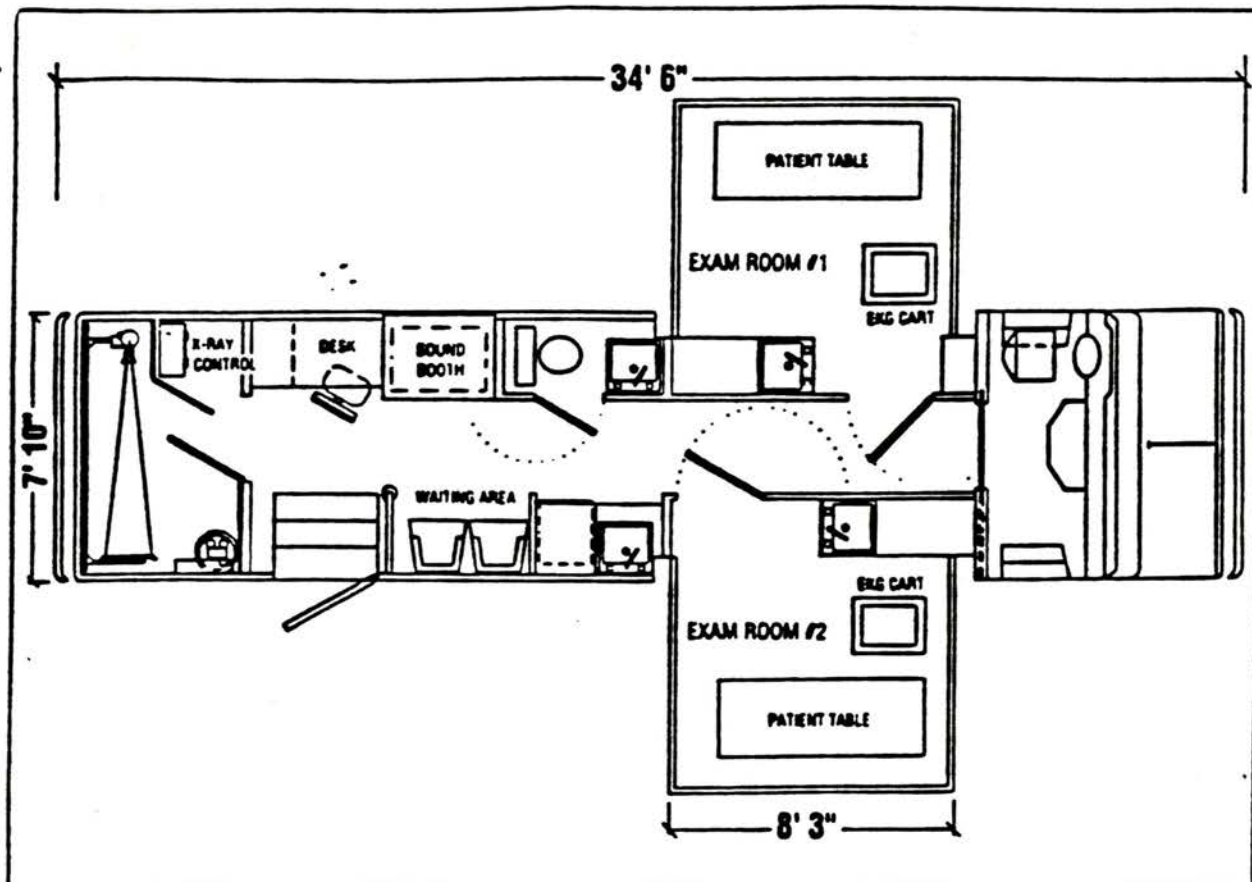
### **Suggested Times and Agenda:**

- 11:30-11:33 Welcome and introductory statement: David Neugent
- 11:33-11:38 Explanation of need for Care A VAN: Consortium member
- 11:38-11:42 Reasons for funding support: Jim Van Wagner, BCBSF West Coast
- 11:42-11:45 Schedule for van visits: Physician or staff member
- 11:45-11:50 Conclusion and questions: David Neugent
- 11:50 Ribbon cutting with speakers
- 11:51-12:15 Tours of van and spokesperson interviews: David Neugent

**Actions:** After remarks from everyone, the four people who spoke will each have a pair of scissors and cut the ribbon which is on the side of the van. Then guests will be invited in the van to tour the facility. Staff should be available to demonstrate equipment or give descriptions of unit. David Neugent will be the spokesperson for the consortium and will be the tour guide for the van. Jim Van Wagner will be the spokesperson for BCBSF.

PROPOSED  
SERVICE  
AREA (ENLARGED)





### Clinical Convenience

- Custom designed interiors to rival fixed site clinics
- Comfortable and spacious environment for patients & staff
- Interior height of 6'9"
- Double expanded unit provides 275 sq. ft. of on-site space

### Commercial Reliability

- Commercial chassis, frame, axles and brakes
- 24,000# load capacity, air ride suspension
- Diesel engine, 7.3 liters, 170 h.p.
- Service by Navistar & Caterpillar

### Operational Convenience

- Automatic transmission
- On-board diesel generator
- Self-contained water system for clinic-like convenience
- Heating and air conditioning for the most demanding environments
- Easy to deploy – expands with the touch of a button
- Automatic leveling assures stable floor
- Expandable units fold into sides of vehicle when traveling

### Dimensions

- Overall length = 34 feet, 6 inches
- Overall width = 8 feet
- Overall height = 11 feet, 3 inches
- MOEX™ rooms = 50 square feet each

**MOEX Corporation**

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