

Orvis Nursing Clinic serves as community health care safety net

By Ken Kempcke

Health and wellness in the Reno-Sparks community is a top priority for the Orvis Nursing Clinic, opening its doors for primary health care that includes office management of acute and chronic illnesses, camp, sports, employment and school physicals, women's health exams and family planning, TB skin testing, well-child checkups, and child, adult and travel immunizations.

The clinic, part of the Orvis School of Nursing, is the one of a handful of nurse practitioner-run clinics in the state of Nevada. The primary goal of the Orvis Nursing Clinic is to provide affordable, quality healthcare to vulnerable populations in a dignified and healing environment.

"Access to good health care is the cornerstone to a healthy society," Doreen Begley, the clinic's administrator, who is also a registered nurse, says. "Without the clinic, many people in Washoe County would have no access to quality primary health care. The Orvis Nursing Clinic has become relied upon by our community as a safety net provider for health care."

Located on Second Street in downtown Reno, the clinic has five exam rooms and five full-time, devoted staff members, including Begley—Margaret Durand, nurse practitioner; Carole Shochat and Susan McFeely, licensed practical nurses; and Ginger Washington, administrative assistant—most with over five years experience at the clinic. Since opening in 1999, the clinic has grown from seeing a thousand patients a year to more than 6,500. "Our



Photo by Theresa Danna-Douglas

Carole Shochat, licensed practical nurse, administers an immunization to a young patient. Founded in 1999, the Orvis Nursing Clinic has established itself as a premier immunization site within the community. As part of the Orvis School of Nursing, it is also the only academically led nursing clinic of its kind in Nevada, and one of only 120 clinics affiliated with a nursing school in the country.

goal for the future is to increase the number of staff and nurse practitioners in order to serve even more clients," Begley says.

The clinic has won numerous awards for its expertise in immunizations, and stresses the importance of illness prevention. It provides immunizations for anything from yellow fever and malaria to hepatitis A and B and is listed on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's international website as a travel immunization provider for northern Nevada.

Nurses at the clinic provide care for primarily low-income families who are underinsured or uninsured. The nurses take great pride in their work. They say they could not ask for a better working environment and feel they really make a difference in the community. Even though it's a small clinic, it provides a broad and far-reaching service to northern Nevada.

The clinic is funded by grants, donations and sliding-fee scale payments based upon federal poverty guidelines. It also collaborates with other community partners: Care Chest, Women's Health Connection, the Washoe County District Health Department, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, Access to Healthcare Network and Catholic Healthcare West.

While the clinic's primary goal is to provide health care services to vulnerable populations, it also functions as an academic learning site for multiple educational entities promoting health professions, as well as the University's Orvis School of Nursing. By working in the clinic's environment, students are able to gain hands-on clinical knowledge as to what working in the real health care arena is like.

"Part of the mission of the Orvis School of Nursing is to provide service to the community, and our clinic provides essential health care to many in our community who would otherwise be unable to afford such services," Patsy Ruchala, director of the Orvis School of Nursing, says. "In addition, it provides us with an additional site for nursing education for both entry-level nursing students and for our master's-level family nurse practitioner students. The clinic is a very important part of the Orvis School of Nursing."

For more information on how you can help support the Orvis Nursing Clinic, please contact Kendall Hardin, director of development, Division of Health Sciences, at (775) 682-7495 or khardin@unr.edu.