

LOOK!

Record-Journal

Abby / 20
Bridge / 17
Movies / 20
Sudoku / 17

It's a week of fun for health centers

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Community Health Center, the nonprofit organization that runs clinics throughout Connecticut, is planning carnivals, cookouts and fairs to educate the public and have a little fun during National Health Center Week.

The free family-orientated health fairs are designed to highlight the services offered by CHC. Since last week and continuing through Friday, free medical services will be offered at the centers in Stamford, Clinton and Middletown.

"This is a national event commemorating all of the work that takes place at health centers across the country," said Yvette Francis, director of the Hartford County CHC sites. "It really is to acknowledge the work that they do for the most needy residents in our communities. Our approach has always been to celebrate our communities and

the work that we do."

CHC is the largest provider of health care to the underserved in the state, with more than 400,000 people served annually. The first center, opened as a volunteer-manned clinic in Middletown, led to the opening of 12 comprehensive care sites. CHC also sponsors mobile dental sites, school-based health centers and services that bring care into homeless and domestic violence shelters.

The National Health Center Week celebration began Aug. 3 at the CHC of New London. Popular cartoon characters Dora the Explorer and SpongeBob SquarePants were there to greet the kids. CHC centers in Danbury and Norwalk held health fairs at local farmers markets.

The CHC in Meriden provided free ice cream Wednesday evening for residents on St. Casimir Drive. More than 80 ice cream bars, pop-sicles and frozen treats were hand-

Coming up

National Health Center Week celebrations:

- ▶ Health fair today from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at corner of Bedford and Spring streets in downtown Stamford.
- ▶ Carnival on Friday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the CHC of Middletown, 635 Main St.
- ▶ For more information, visit www.healthcenterweek.org.

games, free health services are available at all locations. The fairs include immunization, blood pressure and dental screenings and information about Medicaid programs, early detection programs, housing and health department, WIC, diabetes, nutrition and counseling.

Last year, an average of 400 people came to the health fairs for screenings, information and fun.

"The community really is our network. These fairs are an opportunity to reach out to them but also for them to come to us for help or with suggestions," said Francis. "It is important for residents to have something fun to do in their own community, in their own neighborhood. Families can come down and have a fun night while learning something that maybe valuable to them in the future."

ed out.

"We really wanted to do something that would bring some fun to these people in the community," said Agi Erickson, CHC program director. "Something that would take their minds off what else may be going on in their lives. Something simple and fun."

Along with the refreshments and

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