

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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West County Health Centers Celebrates National Health Center Week 2010

Event Part of National Campaign Focusing on One of the Bright Spots of Health Reform

Monday, July 26, 2010 **WEST COUNTY HEALTH CENTERS** is marking National Health Center Week 2010 (NHCW) with the 37th Birthday Party for the Russian River Health Center on Friday, August 13th from 4-7pm, as part of a weeklong campaign (August 8-14) to raise awareness about the mission and accomplishments of America's Health Centers. There are coast-to-coast events at local health centers that include health fairs, press conferences and tours by Members of Congress. This is the first celebration of National Health Center Week since the enactment of the landmark health reform law, which provides a direct investment to strengthen primary care through the expansion of Community Health Centers.

One of the bright spots in America's health care system, Community Health Centers are the family doctor to over 20 million people at 8,000 sites nationwide. Their critical role in providing quality primary care has been widely praised by bipartisan Congressional leaders and the last two Presidential Administrations. Health centers have also been in the public spotlight because now more than ever the uninsured and casualties of the economic recession are seeking their services. That is why funds from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* have made it possible for health centers to serve over two million patients, and over one million uninsured patients. And with health reform, the U.S. health care system will save up to \$122 billion in total health care costs between 2011 and 2015 with the expansion of health centers, according to an analysis by the Geiger Gibson/RCHN Community Health Foundation Research Collaborative at the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services.

"Every day in our waiting rooms I witness the value of having a health care home," said Jennifer Neeley, Fundraising Manager for the West County Health Centers. "When people have a place to go for regular care, they use it and stay healthy. We provide a range of services onsite – primary care services, dentistry, and mental health services. West County Health Centers operates five health center sites in west Sonoma County including the Sebastopol Community Health Center, Occidental Area Health Center, Russian River Health Center, Russian River Dental Clinic and Mental Health Services, and the Forestville Teen Clinic. Our patients not only get the care they need under one roof, but they are treated as individuals, with dignity and respect. This is what health care should be, and what we celebrate during National Health Center Week." To learn more about West County Health Centers please visit www.wchealth.org.

"Celebrating America's Health Centers: Turning the Vision into Reality" is the theme for National Health Centers Week. This theme highlights the program's 45-year record of providing high quality, cost-effective health care, as well as the future of health care for rural communities such as west Sonoma County and across the nation. Health centers will expand their capacity to double the number of patients to 40 million in five years under health reform, saving the U.S. health care system as much as \$300 billion over the next ten years by treating people before they get sick and require costlier care at a hospital.

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