

December 9, 2005

## **Health alliance gears up for 2006, more services**

Austin's Health Alliance for Musicians, a collaborative effort between several area health care providers that was established seven months ago, is adding services because of increased demand.

The alliance was formed because many Austin self-employed musicians can't afford health coverage, and because many of the health services available to low-income families are overloaded or unavailable to musicians.

The alliance aims to improve access to affordable health care for Austin's uninsured musicians, with a focus on prevention and wellness.

Because enrollment in the alliance has grown to more than 350 members and the demand for dental services is rising, the St. David's Community Health Foundation has increased its offer to provide free basic and preventive dental services beyond its original summertime commitment.

Two of St. David's dental vans will be available for services by appointment Dec. 16-22 at Ruta Maya Coffeehouse at 3601 S. Congress Ave. to serve as many alliance members as possible.

Additionally, the dental program will serving alliance members one half-day a week during the school year, and dental service will resume at full capacity next summer.

To ensure that services provided through the alliance keep up with demand, the group's board of directors has begun asking the community for donations.

The group will ask music lovers to become founding sponsors so the organization can offer more health options to musicians. Those who respond will be honored at a special sponsors event in mid-January.

Services offered through the alliance include primary medical care through the Seton Healthcare Network, basic and preventive dental services through the St. David's Community Health Foundation, and low-cost mental health

counseling through the SIMS Foundation.

Seton, St. David's and SIMS are shooting for serving 500 musician-members in 2006.

"I know musicians who take day jobs so that they can get benefits, but their music suffers because of it. By offering me this opportunity through the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians, you are helping me to move my music career forward much faster," says Rachel Loy, an Austin musician.

"As musicians, we are really a lot like a small business where we have to put everything into it, so [the alliance] enables me to put all the time I need to into my career."

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