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Script problems

Close to 17 percent of Oklahomans don't have health insurance. A program called Rx for Oklahoma works to help citizens get the prescriptions they need.

BY GINA A. DABNEY

Halving the dose of prescriptions. Skipping vital prescriptions. Not even purchasing prescriptions. Many without insurance are making these choices in order to pay for shelter, fuel or food.

In Oklahoma, more than 700,000 people — close to 17 percent — don't have insurance or can't afford to purchase medicine, as reported by Rx for Oklahoma, a program working to solve the problem. Administered through the Community Action Agency (CAA) of Oklahoma City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties, it helps people who are uninsured or underinsured receive free or low-cost prescriptions.

"The prescription program for 2008 statewide has assisted over 3,700 clients with 13,770 prescriptions for an esti-

mated cost savings of \$6.4 million," said Angie Dotson, CAA's prescription drug program coordinator for Oklahoma and Canadian counties.

The pilot program, which began in 2004 in Norman, was later approved by Gov. Brad Henry for Oklahoma and Canadian counties in 2005, and soon after, went statewide to all 77 counties. Rx for Oklahoma is funded by a grant allocated to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce in partnership with the Oklahoma Health Care Authority.

Last year, 3,894 Oklahomans requested assistance.

"Oklahoma is one of the states with the highest percentage of people without health insurance," said James Sconzo, executive director of CAA of Oklahoma

There is no age limit. There is no charge for the service. It does work.

—Angie Dotson, Community Action Agency

City and Oklahoma/Canadian Counties. "The prescription program is a lifeline to a lot of people."

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and Pfizer are among the larger pharmaceutical companies that CAA works with to provide free or low-cost medicines to the community.

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce reports that 85 percent of clients assisted by Rx for Oklahoma are uninsured and 15 percent are underinsured. Sconzo said the program materialized when state legislators realized many people don't have health care and that prescriptions are an expensive part of health care.

"There is no age limit," Dotson said. "There is no charge for the service. It does work." **OKG**