



Family Nurse Practitioner Somphone Beasley (right) reviews the clinic schedule with Registered Nurse Linda Simms (left).

Taking health care to the streets

When a person does not have a home, accessing health care can be challenging. But for the men staying overnight at the Men's Cold-Weather Shelter in Corvallis this past winter, the clinic traveled to them.

Each week for five months, SamCare Mobile Medicine — a clinic inside a 40-foot recreational vehicle and staffed by Samaritan clinicians — provided on-demand, walk-in care for shelter clients.

Shelter manager Shawn Collins said the clinic made a positive difference during the winter shelter season.

"Having the medical bus was important because this is a population not usually connected to a primary care provider," said Collins. "Even if they are, they aren't likely to make appointments or go to the clinic when

they need to. Instead, they end up in the emergency room, which isn't good for anyone."

In his years of working with the area's homeless, Collins has seen his share of situations in which people put off treatment for illnesses or injuries, often with dire results.

"When we catch health problems earlier, it can ultimately be a lifesaver for them," he said.

Somphone "Sam" Beasley, FNP, of SamCare Mobile Medicine, agreed.

"This group has a lot of chronic medical issues that need closer monitoring," Beasley said. "Being at the shelter we could provide a continuity of care for them or offer interim care until they see their primary care provider. Coming to them means they have one less obstacle to getting care."

Along with medical care, Beasley's shelter patients often needed a listening ear.

"Not only are they homeless, but some are also going through other challenging life circumstances and they need to know that they've not been forgotten," she said. "It's been rewarding to be available to them with kindness, compassion, empathy and health care."

SamCare Mobile Medicine, funded by a grant from the Pastega Family Foundation, also serves school-aged children, low-income families and rural areas of Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties all year long.

For more information and the SamCare Mobile Medicine schedule, visit samhealth.org/MobileMed.