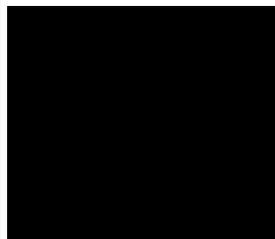




“Options for the Uninsured”

by Andrea Lypka

[Multimedia Journalism Main](#)



St. Petersburg Free Clinic

People gather at 6:30 AM in front of the St. Petersburg Free Clinic's entrance. The doors are locked until 8:30 AM. Then the line moves into the waiting room. First, the scheduled patients are seen by the doctor, followed by the ones without appointments. The waiting room is crowded. There is no place to sit down. The phones are ringing and people are lining up by the front desk. Many of them are chatting with each other in the waiting room.

John R. Henry, who recently

Free & Sliding-Scale Clinics

[View](#) a list of free and sliding-scale clinics, arranged by county, in the Tampa Bay area.

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No Health Care a Reality in Pinellas County

Kathy Day is a teacher at a day care center in Midtown. She teaches the 10 toddlers shapes, colors, songs and reads them stories. She works at daycare full time and lives frugally with no car. Being a single mother with two children in St. Petersburg, she struggles to put together enough money every month to take care of her family. One expense that she can't afford is health insurance.

"If I could afford it, I would buy private health insurance," Day said, "but other bills, food and rent, take priority."

Her high blood pressure requires constant monitoring and medication. Her job doesn't offer health insurance, and she doesn't qualify for state health care because of her income. She's not old enough for Medicare. Day depends on the St. Petersburg



Kathy Day

Free Clinic's services. She moved here five years ago from New York and learned about this health facility from the parents of her daughters' classmate.

"Back then going to the clinic was embarrassing," she said. None of her acquaintances wanted to admit that they ever went to the clinic, she said.

But Day got over her discomfort after she no longer could afford hospital emergency room visits to manage her blood pressure. Even though the emergency room visits' fee only went up by \$25, Day said, it was simply money she did not have. Now she smiles when she talks about how the volunteers from the clinic call her on the phone to find out how she is feeling. Day's 18-year-old daughter, Sacari Brown, helps take care of her mother. She takes her mother's blood pressure like a nurse and reminds her about taking all her medications. The 45-year-old Day has five different prescriptions in a special bag.

She said that she had to go to the emergency room on Thanksgiving for two days. This was frightening for Sacari and her other daughter, 13-year-old Jamie.

For Day the clinic is a lifeline. Although she has enough money for rent, food and other essentials, her medications would cost more than \$130 every other month. Through the clinic they are free. So far Day has been to the medical facility four times and plans to return soon for another follow up visit.

She noticed that the clinic provides the pantry services. "One morning a worker handed out doughnuts and bagels.

You never know who is hungry or didn't have breakfast. That is giving. Their help goes beyond what you are here for," she said.

About the Producer

Andrea Eniko Lypka wrote her first article and dropped it into the mailbox of Szabadság, a newspaper in her hometown, Cluj-Napoca, Romania in 1998. That started her career and she spent the next few years covering environmental, social, and minority issues for this daily newspaper. Andrea also covered business stories from local economy to individual businesses. Her work was also published in the Szabadság (daily), the Erdélyi Napló (weekly), and in three magazines, Családi Tükör, Muvelodés, and Korunk. She also contributed to the online newspaper Internetto from Sopron in Hungary. [more >>](#)

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