

THE FAMILY VAN

We are Family

SUMMER 2007

Van Welcomes New Medical Director



The Family Van staff and supporters are pleased to introduce the program's new medical director, Dr. Bikash Verma. Dr. Verma is a public health physician with specializations in immunology and epidemiology. He most recently served as Director of the International Health Organization.

Dr. Verma will be responsible for all medical aspects of the program, including: managing and expanding cultural competency training, supervising volunteers, medical students, and residents from local hospitals, and providing routine health services such as disease screening and risk reduction education.

Before the International Health Organization, Dr. Verma worked as an HIV/AIDS epidemiologist at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and as an immunologist at Harvard Medical School, the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, and the University of Illinois.

Summer Brings New Van, New Sites

After much anticipation, The Family Van rolled out its new van on June 12 in Hyde Park, one of two neighborhood sites recently added to the weekly route, along with Jamaica Plain.

"We are very excited to launch the new van in a neighborhood where there is such a clear need for our services," said Jennfer Bennet, Executive Director of The Family Van.

The addition of these two sites, scheduled to coincide with the arrival of the new van, involved a year-long process that included eliminating two sites where participation had dwindled: Grove Hall and Egleston Square.

"We conducted studies and held community meetings



Family Van staff pose with the new van, which debuted on June 12

to see which locations were not being used and why, and also where there were gaps in service around the city," Bennet said.

Now in its fifteenth year, the Van has provided service to more than 87,00 at-risk individuals, averaging 120 visitors per week. Bennet

estimates that the expansion will serve about 80 additional Boston residents per week.

The Family Van will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 17 at the Hyde Park location (intersection of Hyde Park Ave. and River St.) to celebrate its first month there. (See page 2 for more details.)

The Family Van Weekly Schedule*

MONDAY

1:30 - 4:30 pm Dudley Square

TUESDAY

9 am - 12 pm Hyde Park

1:30 - 4:30 pm Fields Corner

THURSDAY

9 am - 12 pm Codman Square

1:30 - 4:30 pm Forest Hills T-stop

FRIDAY

9 am - 12 pm Upham's Corner

1:30 - 4:30 pm Mattapan Sq.

*As of June 12, 2007. For details visit www.familyvan.org

Weight Loss: The Starting Line

Earlier this year, Deborah Davis' doctors told her that she would become bedridden if she didn't change her lifestyle and lose weight. Today, thanks to nutritional and fitness counseling through The Family Van, Deborah has dropped 15 pounds and has her sights set on bigger goals.

Deborah's obesity problem finally became a reality for her in February 2007, when doctors advised her to have complete bed rest because her legs could no longer sustain her body weight. It was then that Deborah realized she had a critical condition requiring immediate attention—something she did not feel her doctors could provide. In her experience, scheduling an appointment could sometimes take up to three months, and, once there, she almost always left the doctor's office feeling rushed, unheard, and shortchanged. Resolving to find immediate help, she turned to The Family Van.

Walking onto The Van one Thursday at (continued page 2)

Thank You to Our Supporters

We would like to recognize the following individuals and organizations for their recent support:

Bank of America, The Mabel A. Horne Fund
The Paul & Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation
The Ludcke Foundation
The John H. & Naomi Tomfohrde Foundation
Daniel E. Rothenberg



Photo by Randy Goodman | © Don West

Staff, collaborators, and supporters from Mattapan Community Health Center, Partners Healthcare, and Project Umbrella

Family Van in the News

WBZ Radio's Carl Stevens recently visited The Family Van on-site in Codman Square. He interviewed registered dietician Sandy Allonen, who spoke about the van's mission, services, and route. To link to a video version of this interview, visit our website: www.familyvan.org.

(Weight Loss continued)

Grove Hall, Deborah asked to see the nutritionist, Sandy Allonen. Deborah wanted a weight-loss and nutrition program that would not only help her lose weight, but one that was also culturally appropriate and financially feasible.

Sandy took Deborah to the nearest Stop and Shop and showed her how to buy low-cost, nutritional groceries and produce that appealed to her personal tastes.

"A free, personalized trip to the grocery store with a nutritionist is really hard to come by these days," Deborah said. "I have suffered from being overweight for a couple of years now, and I have attended nutritional classes and weight-loss technique sessions in the past. For the first time I feel equipped with the knowledge and support to overcome obesity."

With 15 pounds lost already, Deborah is still passionate about her fight against obesity, and is continuing her diet and exercise program.

"My fitness goal," she said enthusiastically, "is to run the Boston Marathon with Sandy next year."

SAVE THE DATE!

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 10:00 AM

THE FAMILY VAN'S HYDE PARK SITE

CORNER OF HYDE PARK AVENUE & RIVER STREET

Please join us for a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate our first month in Hyde Park, and to thank all of the community supporters who made it possible to bring the van to this area.

We will be providing our regular services from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Come check out the new van!

For more information or to inquire about donations and partnerships, please contact us: (617) 442-3200 or family_van@hms.harvard.edu

THE FAMILY VAN
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