

Clinica Guadalupana Celebrates 10 Years

By S. JANET GILDEA

Early in 1994 Sisters Peggy Deneweth, R.N., and Janet Gildea, M.D., felt called to respond to the urgent need for health care services in the colonias of far southeast El Paso County near Horizon City, Texas. (Colonias are poor rural communities along the U.S.-Mexico border that have variable access to utilities like electricity, water and sewage disposal.) La Clinica Guadalupana incorporated as a non-profit corporation in August 1994 and the ministry began in the heart of the colonias Jan. 16, 1995.

From the outset emphasis was placed on preventive health services: immunizations and well childcare, pap smears, mammograms and screening for tuberculosis, diabetes and hypertension. Most of these services have been offered free or at minimal cost to patients. Acute and chronic medical conditions are treated at a level appropriate for primary care. Disease prevention and health education are incorporated into each clinic visit and classes are offered by Health Promoter (Promotora) Gloria Morales.

Besides S. Peggy, who serves as clinic director, and S. Janet, family physician and medical director, the staff includes a family nurse practitioner, a physician assistant, a licensed vocational nurse, a registered nurse, four medical assistants, two receptionists, and a community outreach worker/promotora de salud.

With this staffing level and hours of service, the clinic provides over 9,000 visits per year, reflecting a patient base of approximately 3,500 individuals. Since opening in January 1995 services have been provided to 20,000 patients (67,700 visits), including 32,000 immunizations and prenatal care to 1,000 women.

La Clinica Guadalupana has been blessed by the generosity of individuals and faith communities near and far who want to share in this ministry of healing. Because of the donations received, often without restriction, a basic level of primary and preventive health care can be provided in the colonias and no one is refused services because of inability to pay.

As they celebrate their 10th anniversary this year they give thanks to God for their benefactors, the clinic staff, and especially the patients who have trusted them with their care. They ask Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, who inspired this ministry, to continue to guide and direct their works into the future. God has blessed this work!

The Sisters of Charity who serve at La Clinica Guadalupana, El Paso County, Texas, and in the colonia of Anapra in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, were honored with the 2005 Border Hero Award from Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center. The mission of Las Americas is to protect the human rights of El Paso's most vulnerable population: unaccompanied immigrant children who come to the United States to escape abuse/neglect and persecution, refugees and battered women and children by providing high quality pro-bono legal representation and advocacy for these indigent refugees and immigrants.

Sisters Janet Gildea and Peggy Deneweth were also recognized by the State of Texas for their exceptional work at the clinic and in Mexico.

Below: S. Janet Gildea (right), family physician and medical director at La Clinica Guadalupana, El Paso County, Texas, reads a patient's blood pressure.

