

Van donated by A-B sparks corporate/community partnership, offers health care to the community

*By Dionne D. Peoples Of The St. Louis American
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Anheuser-Busch, Inc. donated a health mobile this month to the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, and already hundreds of citizens have benefited from the free health screenings and assistance being offered, organization officials said.

About 100 residents boarded the Healthmobile Unit on Saturday during the Federation of Block Unit's annual delegate assembly held at Vashon High School.

Health care professionals perform basic medical tests such as checking for high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol or diabetes free of charge onboard the Healthmobile Unit. Health care professionals from BJC HealthCare and Community Health-in-Partnership staff the health mobile.

The health care professionals aboard the Healthmobile Unit Saturday also provided private consultations as part of BJC HealthCare's "Ask the Doctor" and "Ask the Pharmacist" series, said Angelia Bills, vice president of communications for the Urban League. This is the second time the Healthmobile Unit has been used since it was donated to the Urban League earlier this month.

Shantana Payne was screened for diabetes for the first time on the Healthmobile Unit and had an opportunity to speak with Nurse Traci Blackmon, who is also the coordinator for community outreach for BJC. "I learned that it doesn't matter how old you are, you could be at high risk," Payne said. She did not have diabetes.

Blackmon said she is excited about the Urban League receiving the health mobile.

"The Urban League is a powerful force in the community and it is an organization we trust," Blackmon said.

"Hopefully, more people will come out."

"Nurses and physicians will now be able to (offer services) outside the wall of the hospital," said June Fowler, vice president of corporate communications for BJC HealthCare.

"This will help us take health care to the community."

Anheuser-Busch began the health mobile program in 1983, said Johnny Furr Jr., vice president of community affairs and supplier development for Anheuser-Busch. When the corporation decided to transition the program, A-B officials sought an organization that could move the program forward, Furr said.

Access to basic health care is still critical and some people are foregoing health care because of the nation's economic crisis, Furr said, noting that the health mobile traveled throughout the country when it was an Anheuser-Busch program.

"We're proud to offer this vehicle to the Urban League to carry out the legacy of taking health screenings where they are needed most," Furr said. "We are passing the torch."

The Urban League received \$5,000 grants each from BJC and UPS for the initial year. It will cost between \$20,000- \$30,000 to operate the health mobile annually, said James Buford, president and CEO of the local Urban League.

"We are grateful to Anheuser-Busch for helping to bring vital health screening to a population of people

who may not get these basic tests any other way," Buford said.

The Healthmobile Unit is scheduled to be at the University City National Night Out Celebration scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 4 at Heman Park, 7210 Olive Blvd. Contact the Urban League at 314-615-3600 to find upcoming dates for the Healthmobile Unit or to arrange the mobile to come to an event.