

# THE HOUSE CALL

## A New 'Cause TV' Series

Created by Shapour Daneshmand, May 2009

### Overview

#### Introduction

In an unprecedented—and unimpressive—landmark, by the end of this year more than 16 million of our American children will be living in poverty! Already, one *million* children are homeless. And children are losing health insurance coverage at a rate of 3,000 every single day.

Millions more children are not getting the health care they urgently need because of simple, mundane obstacles such as a dearth of local doctors, lack of affordable and viable transportation or inadequate and dismissive—and even dangerous—care when they do manage to make it to the doctor's. Our nation's children need realistic, immediate access to medical treatment, especially in serious and urgent cases. Delaying crucially-needed health care can cause a lifetime of painful, debilitating and chronic health problems for these children, as well as a heavy financial and practical burden for their families, and ultimately, our society at large.

This ongoing dilemma caused such deep concern that it inspired the creation of a new 'Cause TV' series, *The House Call*.

#### The Idea

Each week, *The House Call* will bring teams of volunteer medical professionals—led by the show's three enthusiastic and caring physician-hosts—to different impoverished neighborhoods to provide immediate and critical healthcare to our nation's overlooked children. The entire team will descend on a new community every week in a caravan of buses that includes a fully-equipped medical mobile lab. Everything will be documented for national broadcast. As a weekly television series, *The House Call* will be able to finance the treatment of children all across America, ideally, for years to come.

Furthermore, even after the cameras are gone, the children will continue to receive ongoing treatment and medicine from show-recruited local volunteer doctors, hospitals and organizations. On top of all this, the viewing audience will be challenged each week to donate funds toward an appropriate method of delivering first-rate medical care for each community visited. (This could include regular visits by a mobile clinic or a system of transportation to the nearest facility, or even a volunteer-staffed, permanent clinic. )

#### The Pilot

The first vital step towards the achievement of this goal was to create an exciting and dynamic pilot showing the children receiving expert and compassionate medical care, at long last. Because of the goals and aims of this project, *The House Call* quickly attracted an extensive and complete crew of altruistic and enthusiastic professionals from the television industry willing to donate their time, talent and expertise. The support of many outstanding volunteer doctors, nurses, dentists and pharmacists—with equipment and medicine and the back-up of a local hospital—were quick to follow.

The struggling city of Adelanto, CA—a town reeling from the devastating effects of the recession—was chosen for the pilot. In December, 2009 *The House Call* held a Health Fair for the children of Adelanto. Family after family arrived throughout the day and by the time the night fell, over 500 children had been seen by doctors and dentists and had received thorough examinations and diagnoses.

In the end, 16 children were found to require further care and were taken to the co-operating local hospital for ongoing treatment. Afterwards, we brought the families of these children together one final time to apprise them of the hospital's assessments. (As an added, unlooked-for bonus, a child psychologist and a nutritionist who'd heard about our pilot, asked to participate by interviewing the children and counseling the parents!)

### **Format Overview (13 Episodes)**

*The following are the practical details of how The House Call will be formatted:*

- Every season, 12 diverse and struggling communities from across America will be visited. Each episode, our team of travelling pediatricians and lab technicians, along with our fully equipped mobile lab, will accompany *The House Call's* production crew to a pre-scouted community in dire need of medical help. *The House Call's* inflatable clinic, with three medical exam areas for each of the doctor-hosts, will be erected in the middle of each community and a Health Fair will be held where the local children will be examined by our doctors.
- Sponsors will be invited to set up booths with give-aways such as school supplies, toiletries, food and toys, etc., as an added incentive for the families to visit and to inspire them to, just one more time, put their trust in the medical community. As well, *The House Call* will set up fun games and crafts to occupy the children while they wait. (Other sponsors will be invited to donate medicine and medical supplies.)
- When families arrive, local nurse-practitioners and other volunteers, including medical students, will triage the children and interview the parents. Children who have medical issues that need to be addressed will be sent to one of our three doctors.
- The doctors will conduct thorough exams on each of these children who will, where necessary, be sent to the mobile lab for tests and lab work. The parents will be present throughout, and will be advised on how best to become proactive partners in the ongoing maintenance of their child's optimal health, as well as educated participants in any necessary ongoing care and treatment of their child.
- At the end of the day, after the lab results are in, the doctors will consult and decide which children need further follow-up treatment, therapy and/or medicine. The families of those children will be asked to come back the next day.
- That next day, all three doctors will be present in the cleared-out tent as the families are ushered in, one by one, to receive the diagnoses of their children. With parental consent, the children's files will be sent to a local co-operating hospital who will have previously agreed to carry out the follow-up care. *The House Call* will track these children's progress, to be included in the final edit of that week's episode.
- An essential and exhilarating component of this series will be the invited audience participation. *The House Call* is organized so that the life of each episode exceeds the episode itself. At the end of each episode, audience participation will be inspired by a rally-cry for awareness, a call to community service, and specifically, for donations to implement—along with government agencies and non-government organizations—whatever systems have been determined to best meet the ongoing health care needs of each community visited. (The start of each new episode will begin with an announcement of how much money was raised by the audience for the previous week's community.)
- The 13<sup>th</sup> and final episode will be an in-depth follow-up of the children and communities visited, creating an exciting and heart-warming finish to each season.