

Free mobile mammograms offered

By John Austin/features@trcle.com | Posted: Thursday, October 16, 2014 4:11 pm

HOPE

Mary Phifer, left, has seen hundreds of underserved Johnson County women who have come to the Texas Health Resources Mobile Health Unit for exams since the bus began visiting HOPE Medical & Dental Clinic last year. When women call to schedule an appointment, they talk to a person, not a computer, Diane Westcott, executive director at HOPE, said.

The bus stops here.

That's the message HOPE Medical & Dental Clinic wants to get out about the Texas Health Resources Mobile Health Unit.

The big bus visits the West Cleburne clinic once or twice a month and offers free well-woman exams and mammograms to low-income women with no insurance who are Johnson County residents.

Family nurse practitioner Mary Phifer is in charge of the bus, which added HOPE Clinic to its schedule about 10 months ago.

Although October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Phifer and her staff are not limited to thinking pink.

"We have discovered many diseases that would have gone undetected, unattended, uncared for," including conditions such as hypertension, which patients might be unaware of. "That's what screenings are all about."

Dr. Steve Johnson is HOPE's medical director. He said that the range of patients who fall into the low-income, under-insured category is surprisingly wide.

"We see people you wouldn't think of as indigent folks," especially since the recession began, Johnson said. "I've seen bankers and CPAs,"

Qualifying is straightforward, Dianne Westcott, executive director at HOPE, said.

"If you don't have insurance you pretty much qualify for the clinic and the services on the bus," Westcott said.

Women must be 35 years old to have a mammogram, and 21 years old to have the well-woman exam, Phifer said.

And as for the demand, Westcott said, "We've got a waiting list through February next year," for mammograms and well-woman exams.

Rosemary Galdiano, manager of the Wellness for Life Mobile Health service, said buses that offer the same services stop in other Cleburne locations and across the county.

"Any of the other locations, anybody can schedule an appointment," she said, "whether they have insurance or not."

If you go:

To schedule an appointment for the Texas Health Resources Mobile Health Unit when it visits Hope Medical & Dental Clinic, call the clinic at 817-641-5858.

To schedule an appointment for other Texas Health Resources Mobile Health Units, call 855-318-7696.