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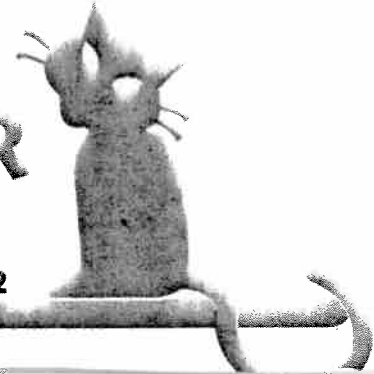
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Portico Healthnet

Our mission is to reduce the number of people without coverage for healthcare services

BY BILL GRAY, PORTICO HEALTHNET,
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Health care reform is getting a lot of discussion in Washington these days – and for good reason. The number of Americans without health insurance topped 46 million last year. Here in Minnesota, 1.1 million of us were without health coverage for all or part of 2007-2008. And our state's communities of color were more likely to be uninsured than whites – while 21 percent of whites were uninsured at some point during this two-year period, the rate was nearly 40 percent for African Americans, and over 50 percent for Latinos.

While there are state and local health care initiatives and government programs for health coverage, eligibility is generally based on complicated formulas involving assets and income, and the application processes involved can be confusing. In addition, many working people struggle to find an affordable solution when they find they make too much to qualify for government health care programs, but can't afford health coverage on their own.

If you find yourself in such a situation, Portico Healthnet can help. Portico is a non-profit organization that collaborates with hos-

pitals, health plans, clinics, government agencies and community groups to provide access to health care services for individuals with low incomes and no insurance. Portico facilitates access to affordable health coverage through public health programs, or Portico's own coverage plan.

When you reach out to Portico, a professional staff of community health workers will connect you with a program that fits your family's needs, assist you through completion of various program applications, and ensure you understand the options that are available to you. If you make too much to qualify for health coverage assistance, but can't afford coverage on your own, Portico's own coverage plan may be an option. This program is available to individuals and families living in Hennepin, Ramsey, Dakota and Washington counties that meet income guidelines and are currently uninsured.

Portico's coverage model provides access to primary and preventive medical care, specialty medical care, outpatient mental health services and prescription assistance. A key component of Portico's coverage plan is ongoing interaction with an assigned care manager who provides personal-

ized assistance on how to access services paid for by Portico, and how to use the health care system effectively. Fourteen metro-area hospitals, including Abbott Northwestern, fund the care that Portico's coverage program provides.

Portico Healthnet's mission is to reduce the number of people without coverage for health care services. When people have access to affordable health care coverage, they can visit a doctor regularly, get medicine when they need it, and treat medical problems before they become serious. Health care coverage means that people can think about being healthy – not about how they will pay a medical bill. Workers with health coverage have fewer unpaid sick days. Students with health coverage do better in school. And everyone with health coverage is able to lead a healthier life.

To reach Portico Healthnet, call 651-603-5100. Julia McCarthy is Outreach Manager for St. Paul-based Portico Healthnet. She can be reached at jmccarthy@porticohealthnet.org. This information was provided by Portico Healthnet.