



## Club Helps Town Get Medical Care

By Guy Webster  
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YOUNG—Whichever way you drive here, you travel more than 20 miles on a dirt road. The closest outside medical help is more than an hour's drive away, in Payson. Globe is more than two hours the other way. Winter storms sometimes close the roads.

Living in a remote valley is alluring, as the number of homes under construction around Young testifies. But with population growing rapidly past 300 in the past decade, then past 400, the Pleasant Valley Homemakers thought that better medical care should be available locally.

The club had established a community first-aid station in 1945 and kept it stocked with supplies for more than 30 years. By 1976, the area's growth, plus the need to move the first-aid station anyway, prompted the Homemakers to start a new project: getting a professionally staffed health center for the community.

For the eventual success of their project, the Pleasant Valley Homemakers received a first-place award this year in a national contest of Extension Homemaker clubs' activity records in health, food and nutrition projects.

Now Young has the new, four-room Pleasant Valley Community Medical Center, where William Peck, M.D. (called "Dr. Bill" locally) sees patients every Monday and Thursday. He's also available for emergency care on other days. The Homemakers Club did not accomplish

Photograph: The Pleasant Valley Homemakers started this thrift shop in Young to raise funds for a community medical building. (Photo by Ted Bundy.)

this by itself; many groups and individuals played key roles, and Peck happened to move to Young at an opportune time. But the Homemakers did start the project, and several members are still active on the medical center's board of directors and in its fundraising Thrift Shop.

In 1976, Brenda Straw took the job of chairing the Homemakers' Health Committee. She was running one of Young's two restaurants at the time, but had worked in the past as a licensed practical nurse in Phoenix. "I listened a lot to the people in Young," Straw recalled this summer from her new home in Payson. "A lot of older people were saying, 'I wish there were a way of getting a doctor here.'"

Knowing the community was much too small to support a full-time physician, Straw checked other possibilities. In 1977 she helped arrange for Dr. Richard Meyers of Payson to begin visiting Young once a week. He saw patients in a housetrailer.

The same year, a Homemakers committee headed by Nita Heckman started the Pleasant Valley Thrift Shop to raise money for a health building. The shop sells used clothes and household goods that are donated, and does custom quilting. Last year, the shop earned more than \$4,700 toward supporting the medical center.

Also in 1977, Clifford and Pearl Martin donated an acre of land as the site for a medical building. To accept the gift on behalf of the community, the Pleasant Valley Community Medical Center was formed and incorporated, with Straw as first president of its board of directors.

In 1979, the Homemakers turned over the Thrift Shop to the Medical Center. The club also donated \$5,000 from its own funds to purchase equipment and furnishings for the center. The funds had been raised through bazaars, quilt sales, suppers, bake sales and community calendar sales.



Participants in the new medical center's dedication day celebration. (Photo by Mark Culbertson, Samaritan Health Service.)



Meanwhile the Medical Center site was being developed by donations of labor, money and materials. A baseball team of Forest Service employees dug the foundation. Brown Drilling Co. donated the well. Andy Coscia of Mesa donated the 22-by-32-foot metal building. Bill Goettel of Phoenix donated the heating and cooling system. Local plumbers, carpenters and electricians contributed their labor.

Meyers stopped seeing patients in Young when he moved away from Payson in 1979. That year, Peck moved to Young. He had been a highly-paid radiologist in Florida, then a horse wrangler for a Tucson dude ranch, then director of a primary-care medical clinic in Apache Junction. At first, he commuted from Young to Apache Junction and Payson.

Peck helped the Pleasant Valley Community Medical Center work out an agreement with Samaritan Health Service of Phoenix to provide medical care in Young. Samaritan is a non-profit corporation that runs several Arizona hospitals and health clinics. The community provides the building, utilities and equipment. Samaritan provides Peck's salary and insurance, expendable supplies, administrative backup, and the availability of air ambulance service. Peck's wife, Cynthia, also works at the center as accountant and receptionist.

With the medical center in operation, the Pleasant Valley Homemakers have moved on to other projects. They have already raised more than \$8,000 to use eventually on a community activities building.

As current club president Pat Wright commented, "Most people, when they want something done in town, they usually talk with one of our members first to get things started."

Gila County Extension Home Economist Betty Jean Faris of Globe works closely with Homemakers in Young and the rest of the county. She said, "In a small town like Young, the Homemakers are a nucleus for the whole community."

**Top center and right: Children with balloons and medical center board president Sam Wright with a cake join in dedication day festivities at the Pleasant Valley Community Medical Center. (Photos by Mark Culbertson, Samaritan Health Service.)**  
**Top and bottom left: Nita Heckman at the thrift shop and Dr. William Peck at the medical center. (Photos by Ted Bundy.)**

Besides several bake sales, raffles and bazaars, some special projects helped the school fund grow. For the U.S. Bicentennial, the Homemakers prepared and published a 95-page history of the area. They have sold 4,000 copies, with proceeds helping to build the school. A one-day benefit celebration raised \$5,000. A fishing derby and fish fry raised \$900. James Peart of Winslow read a newspaper story about Punkin Center's school project and donated \$4,000 to it before he died. The school district also had a building fund that had been accumulating for several years.

In 1980, nine community residents, including Homemakers' Club president Frances Conway, formed a non-profit corporation to borrow the rest of the money needed for building the school. Funds from the school district's regular levy will pay off the loan.

Construction began in May 1980. A "Spring Fling" celebration with an admission fee of one sack of cement supplied much of the foundation material. Volunteer labor made the building affordable. Construction contractor Eddie Myers, husband of a Homemaker, donated his time as foreman for the dozens of volunteers from 14 to 75 years old. The 12,500-square-foot steel building was erected by the company that sold it, but the interior was finished by skilled workmen who donated their time. Homemaker Club members helped with some construction and also provided meals for the workers.

The building now houses four classrooms, a teachers' lounge and a large, bare gymnasium. Fundraising continues for finishing off the gym and kitchen, and for adding an office, a meeting room and upstairs classrooms.

"Even in the summer, the building is being used almost every day," said Annie Heck, a Homemaker and wife of school board president Bob Heck. Bingo games every Thursday raise money for the school. Tues-



Volunteers prepare the foundation for the new school. (Photo by John Dryer.)

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days are square dance nights. School teacher Jeff Shepherd led week-day recreation programs for youngsters this summer. Last spring, Gila Pueblo College held Monday night classes at the school. Private groups use the building for meetings and festivities; they pay a fee to cover utilities.

The first- to eighth-graders of the Punkin Center area are the school's most important users. Some outsiders have asked Homemaker Carolyn Dryer why the community has worked so hard on its new school. She said, "I tell them, 'Can you think of anything better to spend your time working on? These kids are our future.'"



Above left: Punkin Center Homemakers' Club president Frances Conway hands over a check for the completed exterior of the new school to building foreman Don Burden. (Photo by John Dryer.)

Above right: Punkin Center's new school dwarfs the old schoolhouse beside it. (Photo by Ted Bundy.)

Below left: Students help move furniture from the old school to the new one. (Photo by Betty Sue Conway.)