

On the Road to Wellness

September 14, 2009 11:15 AM Fran Simon

fsimon@tulane.edu

George McClain is one of the many residents of New Orleans who is glad that Tulane Community Health On the Road visits his neighborhood every week. Last March, he walked two blocks from his home to the parking lot of Winn-Dixie to board a large, green bus ? a medical clinic on wheels ? for a routine checkup.



Dr. Michele Simoneaux, right, one of the three doctors who sees patients on the mobile medical unit, counsels George McClain. Since Hurricane Katrina he has had difficulties taking care of his health, including managing high blood pressure. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The doctor said McClain, 55, was having a stroke. An ambulance rushed McClain to Tulane Medical Center, where he was assessed by the stroke team and admitted for four days. Upon discharge from the hospital, McClain made an appointment for follow-up care at the mobile medical unit back in his neighborhood.

Dr. Karen DeSalvo, vice dean for the [Office of Community Affairs and Health Policy](#) at the Tulane School of Medicine, estimates that monthly more than 1,200 people in the New Orleans area who would otherwise be without access to health care receive services on the custom-built [mobile medical unit](#) and at two Tulane neighborhood

clinics.

“Our mission is to ensure that everyone in New Orleans has access to a high-quality, neighborhood-based, primary health care medical home,” says DeSalvo. “‘Everyone’ is the significant word, meaning especially low-income and other vulnerable populations.”

Tulane operates [neighborhood clinics](#) at Covenant House Health Center in downtown New Orleans and in New Orleans East. Along with the mobile unit, these clinics represent what DeSalvo calls a “medical home” model of health care based on the ongoing, collaborative relationship between physician and patient.

The team onboard the mobile unit, which travels four days a week to parking lots of stores, churches and apartment complexes, offers physicals and pelvic exams, monitors and treats chronic illnesses, and provides urgent care, as well as counseling and assistance with Medicare or Medicaid.