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*MetroWest Free Medical Program awarded \$3,500 grant to expand  
free medical services*

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The MetroWest Free Medical Program has been awarded \$3,500 from the Catalyst Fund to support a second free clinic in Framingham. The MetroWest Free Medical Program provides medical care to residents of the MetroWest area who do not have health insurance. The two-hour Tuesday night free clinic at Congregation Beth El in Sudbury is staffed with volunteer physicians, nurses, and social workers.

Through advertising and word of mouth, MetroWest Free Medical Program has seen an increased demand on its services. Last year, the program provided care to 515 individuals, seeing an average of 25 patients per week. Throughout this year, the number of people seeking care has steadily increased to about 50 people per week. In response, the program has added a second night of free service in Framingham at the First Parish Church, in anticipation of treating 800 individuals in 2009. The grant award will be used to purchase a laptop computer, printer, fax, filing cabinet, exam tables, privacy screen, and general medical supplies for the clinic in Framingham which opened in October.

“We are thankful to the Blue Cross Blue Shield associates for making this grant possible,” said Gary Hirsch, President of the MetroWest Free Medical Program. “Our dedicated volunteer staff couldn’t do this without access to proper medical equipment and supplies.”

Money for the Catalyst Fund is donated by employees of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. The Catalyst Fund is administered by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, which is a private, non-profit health care philanthropy.

“The Catalyst Fund review committee recommended the grant award to the MetroWest Free Medical Program because the clinic has experienced a tremendous growth in the demand of medical services in the past year,” said Jarrett T. Barrios, President of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation.

The free clinics operated by the MetroWest Free Medical Program provide annual health exams, asthma care, dental screenings, a monthly diabetes clinic, mental health counseling, and prescriptions at little or no cost. MetroWest is housed at the First Parish Church in Framingham every Thursday evening and at the Congressional Beth El in Sudbury every Tuesday evening. The program uses the Temple’s sanctuaries and converts the space into a medical facility that has designated areas for patient registration, a waiting room, and exam rooms. The First Parish and Beth El provide space to accommodate the program at no cost.

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### **More about the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation**

The mission of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation is to expand access to health care. Through grants and policy initiatives, the Foundation works with public and private organizations to broaden health coverage and reduce barriers to care. It focuses on developing measurable and sustainable solutions that benefit uninsured, vulnerable and low-income individuals and families in the Commonwealth, and served as a catalyst for the pioneering Massachusetts health care reform law passed in 2006. The Foundation was founded in 2001 with an initial endowment of \$55 million from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts; the endowment has since grown to \$108 million. The Foundation operates separately from the company and is governed by its own 18-member Board of Directors. It is one of the largest private health philanthropies in New England and in 2007 was awarded the Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy Engagement by the Council on Foundations.