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New United Way program offers discount drug cards

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By SEAN CASEY, scasey@thisweeknews.com

ThisWeek Staff Writer

Fairfield County's under-insured can now obtain cheaper prescriptions.

This month, United Way of Fairfield County introduced a program offering discount drug cards for more than 5,000 county residents who don't have prescription drug coverage. These free cards, which require no registration and have no limits on usage, age or income, should help provide economic stability to those strained by high drug costs, according to Sherry Orlando, executive director of United Way of Fairfield County.

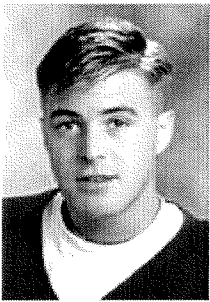
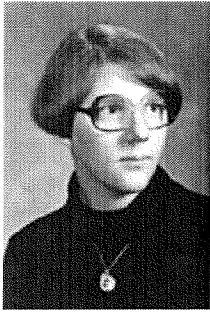
"Too many families struggle with making the choice between medicine and food," Orlando said. "We're hopeful that savings received will help families find balance."

The United Way is offering the program through Family Wize, a nationwide partnership committed to reducing the cost of medicine by \$100-million in five years for people without prescription coverage.

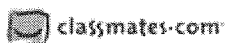
Family Wize distributes its discount cards through more than 320 other United Way agencies throughout the United States, and the partnership is able to secure bargain bulk prices with the drug companies based on its growing base of program members, Orlando said.

Although no specific figures are available for how many people are without any prescription coverage in Fairfield

SHE
married
HIM???!



and they've
got 7 kids??



County -- where 4.5 percent of residents live below the poverty line, according to the county's job and family services agency -- the national average is approximately 20 percent.

Applying that average to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006 population estimate, more than 28,000 people in Fairfield County live without drug assistance.

According to Laura Holton, community-services director for Fairfield County Job and Family Services, some of these residents receive help from Medicaid. However, a significant number of them earn too much to qualify for the Medicaid program, and these are the residents, mostly single adults and seniors, who can benefit the most from the discount-card program.

"Those people that are falling through the cracks, that's where I see a huge need," Holton said. "That starts a downward spiral and that's where we see some families get jammed up."

Orlando said the county is distributing 5,000 cards beginning this week, with the option for more, depending on participation in the program.

Residents can pick up the cards at the Pickerington Area Chamber of Commerce, 13 E. Columbus St.; United Way offices, 115. S. Broad St. in Lancaster; Fairfield Medical Center, 401 N. Ewing St. in Lancaster; and Fairfield County Job and Family Services, 239 W. Main St. in Lancaster.

Cards are also available at participating pharmacies in the area, including CVS, Discount Drug Mart, Giant Eagle, K-Mart, Kroger, Meijer, Sam's, Target, Walgreen and Wal-Mart pharmacies in Pickerington, Reynoldsburg and Canal Winchester.

Cards are also at Village Pharmacy in Baltimore.

No proof of income or medical coverage is necessary to obtain a card. Once participants have them, they can use the cards immediately.

For more information about the program, contact the United Way of Fairfield County, or log onto www.familywize.com.