

Libby has new lease on life due to local health center

By Kathleen Alexander, communications director, Ravenswood Family Health Center.

Like many uninsured, Libby Adibi delayed seeking medical care even when she knew what was wrong. She had a tumor in the sinus cavity, like one removed 12 years earlier.

She let it go for two years even though it was difficult to breathe and a "slow depression" made it difficult to keep up with her firewood business, her livelihood.

She finally sought help at Ravenswood Family Health Center, where she was assigned to Dr. Justin Wu, associate medical director at the Belle Haven Clinic.

"When I saw her the first time, she was having severe headaches on a daily basis," he says. "Without insurance, without a primary care home, she had no way to get specialty care or to know about resources available to her. Once I saw how serious her situation was, I was able, through our referral system, to get her into specialty care at Stanford."

On Oct. 25, Libby underwent a surgery that removed a tumor the size of an orange. She recalls coming to and realizing that the depression had lifted.

"It was amazing," she says. "I was in and out the same day."

Sitting amidst the firewood she's selling, she says with a hearty laugh, "Now when friends ask me what are you doing, I say, 'I'm sitting here quietly and breathing.'"

Ravenswood Family Health Center's Belle Haven Clinic provides a medical home for 2,300 of the 10,300 patients estimated to be seen at Ravenswood in 2011.

It offers comprehensive health care for all ages, includ-



Donations to the Holiday Fund benefit Ravenswood Family Health Center and nine other community-service organizations.

ing primary medical care, behavioral health and dental care services, serving low-income and uninsured families living in Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and Redwood City.

Ninety-five percent of its patients are Latino, African American and Pacific Islanders; 90 percent earn incomes at or below the federal poverty level.*

In the past two years, with a major boost from a Sequoia Healthcare District grant, Belle Haven increased staffing.

"We've been able to extend services to more people and to include behavioral health and chronic disease management, and open up access for the patients to utilize our new dental clinic," Dr. Wu says.

Access to primary care leads to early intervention, thereby reducing expensive emergency care and hospitalization. This is a cornerstone in health care reform.

As a nonprofit, federally qualified health center, RFHC ensures that everyone who seeks care receives compassionate, quality comprehensive health care.

Visit ravenswoodfhc.org or call (650) 330-7418 for more information about the Ravenswood Family Health Center.

* The federal poverty level is annual income of \$22,350 for a family of four.



Libby Adibi can breathe freely and work again.