

# THE DAILY JOURNAL

The Daily Journal  
Wednesday, May 17, 2006

**PENINSULA INTERFAITH ACTION**  
1336 ARROYO AVENUE TEL: 650-592-9181  
SAN CARLOS, CA 94070-3913 FAX: 650-592-9183

## Hundreds call for new deal in health care

By Dana Yates  
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

Hundreds of people from San Mateo and Santa Clara counties crowded St. Matthew's Catholic Church last night calling on County Supervisor Jerry Hill to help create affordable health care for everyone.

Peninsula Interfaith Action, which represents 19,000 families from 34 congregations, wants San Mateo County to enact changes that will provide health care insurance for low-income families. The current Health Plan of San Mateo and WELL program work independently to provide health coverage for people with very low incomes, but fails to help homeless and those making slightly more than the low salaries that qualify for the programs.

PIA asked Hill to lead the charge to make the WELL program part of the Health Plan of San Mateo. By allowing the Health Plan of San Mateo to administer the WELL program, PIA leaders believe it will save money that can be used to create new adult programs. The number of restrictions leaves few adults qualifying for government sponsored health care in this area.

The county already sponsors health care benefits for all children, PIA argues that it's a good start, but doesn't go far enough.

Adult health benefits would help Alejandra Mendoza, who was fired from her

See HEALTH, Page 35

## HEALTH

Continued from page 1

job as a hotel cook for taking too many days off to care for her sick children. Her 10-year-old son has leukemia and needs constant blood transfusions while two of her three other children have juvenile diabetes that require regular injections. The family was covered under the company's Kaiser plan until Mendoza was fired.

The children were able to maintain coverage under the counties Healthy Kids program, but Mendoza did not qualify for the WELL program because she could not prove she had enough money to pay her part. With varicose veins, high blood pressure and depression, Mendoza said she worries she won't be healthy enough to care for her children.

Hill, a strong advocate for health care changes, said he's willing to continue the charge with help from state legislators. Having the Health Plan of San Mateo administer the WELL program is illegal, but a bill by state Sen. Jackie Speier, D-San Mateo, aims to change that, Hill said.

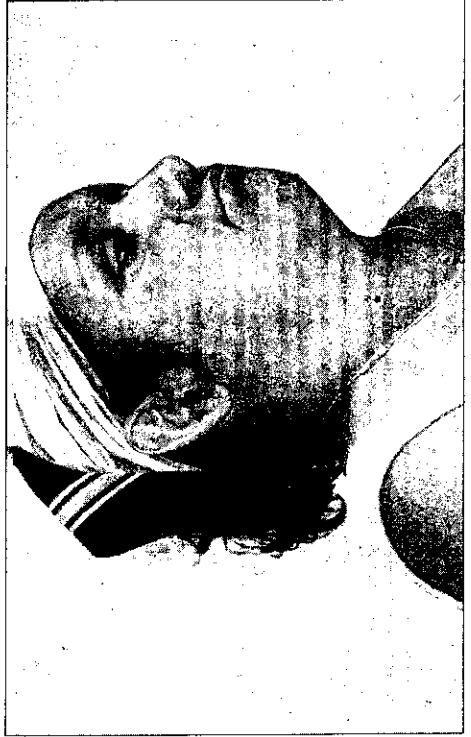
"The health care system we have is broken," Hill said. "The system we have is not sustainable. We cannot spend the money we have and continue getting the results we have been getting."

The county spends between \$55 million and \$58 million a year to support the San Mateo Medical Center. Next it is expected to contribute up to \$75 million, Hill said.

The county's ability to move forward with PIA plan relies heavily on Speier's Senate Bill 458. If the bill passes, Hill said he will ask the county Board of Supervisors to approve funding to research PIA's plan.



PHILIP COSBY OF BELMONT PRAYS DURING A PUBLIC MEETING ON HEALTH CARE JUSTICE HELD TUESDAY NIGHT AT ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH IN SAN MATEO.



ALEJANDRA MENDOZA OF PALO ALTO SHARED HER FAMILY'S HEALTH CARE WOES WITH ALMOST 500 LISTENERS AT PENINSULA INTERFAITH ACTION'S PUBLIC MEETING ON HEALTH CARE JUSTICE HELD TUESDAY NIGHT AT ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH IN SAN MATEO.