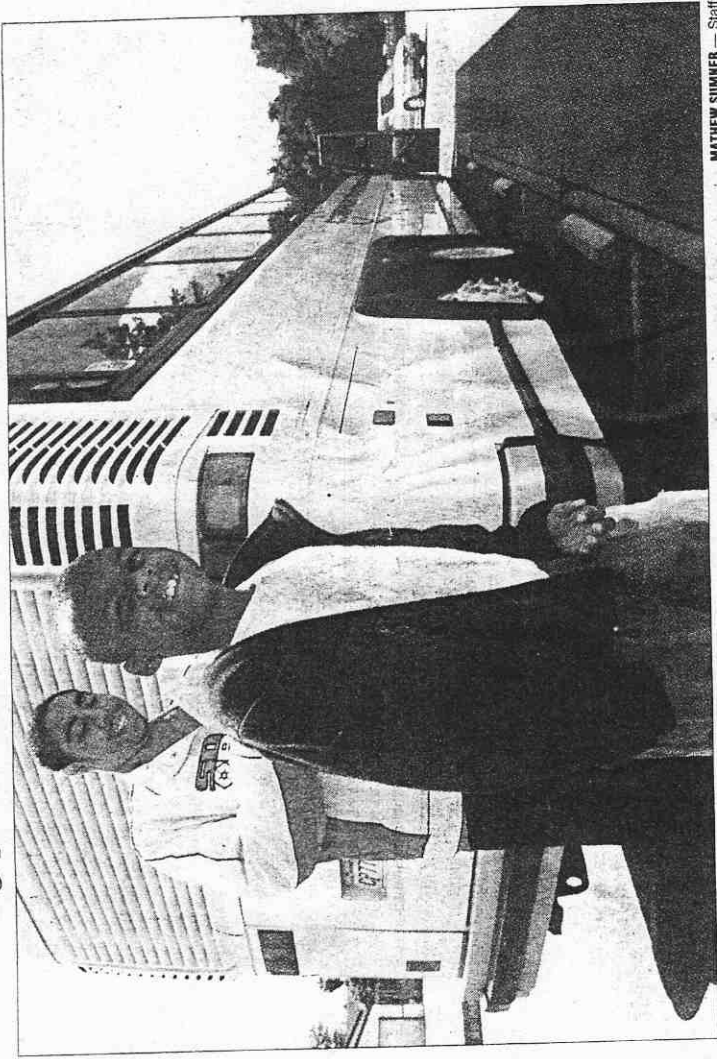


SPREADING THE HEALTH

Working-poor families rally for expanded state insurance



MATHEW SUMNER — Staff

COUSINS Patrick Gates and Melvin Hall wait to board a bus to Sacramento with the group Peninsula Interfaith Action on Wednesday in East Palo Alto. The group is taking its case for expanded state health care for children to the politicians.

Locals say county offers healthy example

■ In San Mateo, Healthy Kids program covers 32,000 children younger than 18

By Nicole Neroulias
STAFF WRITER

EAST PALO ALTO

WITHOUT health insurance, Esther Leon treated her family's stomachaches with mint leaves from her garden. Two of her three children, undocumented immigrants like herself, don't qualify for state aid; her husband's landscaping income cannot pay for private insurance.

In 2003, the San Mateo County Children's Health Initiative launched the Healthy Kids program, which covers 32,000 children younger than

On the Web
San Mateo County Children's Health Initiative: www.smochi.org
California Healthy Kids Campaign: <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/keepthepromise>

18 — including Leon's — regardless of immigration status. To qualify, a family of four must make less than \$72,000 — 400 percent of the federal poverty level.

In East Palo Alto and throughout Northern California, Leon and other working-poor and undocumented-immigrant parents rallied Wednesday to urge the state to follow the county's

Increased coverage
The state's Healthy Families program covers children younger than 19, who are in the country legally, and who are in families that make up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. More than 800,000 California children remain uninsured.

The proposed statewide Healthy Kids program would cover more than 1.5 million children nationwide. The program would be phased in over three years.

Please see **HEALTH**, News 7

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

Local advocates rally for Healthy Kids

► **HEALTH**, from News 1

Kids campaign would raise the age of eligibility to 21 and include undocumented-immigrant children and households that make up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level.

The estimated additional cost to the state would be \$120 million to \$330 million a year, said Rachel Richman, Assemblywoman Chan's chief of staff.

At the same time, AB 772 would save millions of dollars spent by counties like San Mateo, which pay for their own programs on top of what the state currently offers.

AB 772 would further benefit the county's Healthy Kids program by publicizing and streamlining insurance options for undocumented-immigrant families, said Juany Jimenez, a community health advocate for the Ravenswood Family Health Clinic in East Palo Alto.

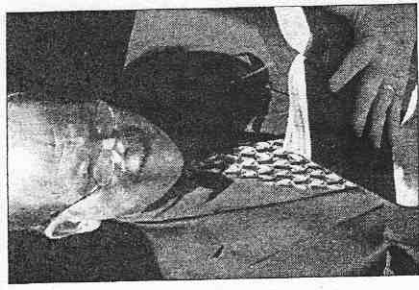
"As good as this program is, we are not reaching many families in San Mateo County," she said, citing an estimated 17,000 county children that remain uninsured.

Even Leon, who has discussed her children's status several times with the Ravenswood clinic personnel, said she has trouble understanding their treatment options.

"My kids are in good health, but my oldest has constant headaches and nosebleeds," she said in Spanish.

"I went to the Ravenswood clinic a month ago, but they told me it's normal. They haven't seen us to get any scans or anything."

The East Palo Alto rally was



MATHEW SUMNER — Staff

THE REV. RICHARD DAVIS of Broadmoor Presbyterian Church in Daly City reads quotes from the Bible relevant to child care at a Peninsula Interfaith Action rally for East Palo Alto. Representatives of the group will take its case to Sacramento.

sponsored by Peninsula Interfaith Action, a federation of 28 congregations in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Afterward, participants headed to Sacramento, where they joined thousands of California residents in support of AB 772.

A Sacramento town-hall meeting precedes the Assembly Health Committee's April 26 hearing on the bill.

Staff writer Nicole Neroulias can be reached at (650) 306-2427 or nneroulias@sanmateocounty-times.com.