

HEALTH CARE ACCESS GROUP PRESS RELEASE

Why are we going to DC?

For sometime a small group in Knoxville has planned an April Rally in Washington DC to bring national attention to the urgent need of the many Americans who, for various reasons, do not receive adequate healthcare. We do not propose any specific public policy. We do not seek special legislation; nor, do we support any candidate for public office. We simply hope to make our fellow citizens truly aware that millions in the wealthiest nation on earth are hurting in silence.

We struggled to prepare a concise and clear answer to the inevitable question: Why are you going to Washington? Our answer came on Sunday, March 2nd when *60 Minutes* aired a story on a January 2008 Remote Area Medical (RAM) Healthcare Exposition in Knoxville. One of our members had volunteered as a physician, so we knew what had been accomplished, but we were unprepared for the poignant closing scene when Stan Brock was forced to tell more than 400 potential patients they could not be seen. They slowly and stoically walked down the hill after spending many hours waiting for what to them was treatment of last resort. The need was far greater than the resources.

So, why are we going? We are going for the 400 folks in Knoxville who sought, but could not find the most basic medical and dental care. They had many reasons for turning to RAM. Some had no insurance. Some had inadequate insurance. Some did not qualify for any other assistance. The reasons were immaterial because this happens every day across this country. In Knoxville it was 400. In a small town it may be 40. In a metropolis it could be 40,000. The most conservative estimates are between 45 and 50 million Americans without access to adequate medical care; and, almost 100 million without access to adequate dental care. Again, we are going to DC for the 400 in Knoxville turned away from desperately needed help and the millions of Americans who will be.

What do we want for them? Our hope is to bring real attention to their need. In America, it seems we have eyes, but we do not see. The first step is to recognize the nature and scope of the problem. After that we can expand existing solutions and find many new ones. Our group is focusing on volunteerism through totally free medical clinics, based on the successful free clinic experience in Knoxville. This is one of many possible strategies, but real success will come only after we see the need as it truly exists. So, what do we want for those who have been turned away without healthcare? Awareness that they are in real need and the heart knowledge that promotes action.

For additional information, please call 865 970-1751, and we will contact you.

To view the RAM story visit: <http://web.mac.com/raythompson/Charity/RAM.html>