

Care

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patients \$45 a month. For this, she offers up to seven no-pay visits in the first year, four in the second year, and five every following year. Why those numbers?

"It covers most needs for most people," Carr says. "For most adults, a physical and four sick visits a year should be sufficient to meet their needs. Even my patients with diabetes or heart problems, I see about once every three months."

Carr's practice is based at the Multnomah Family Care Clinic in West Portland. The Co-op does have a few providers in most areas of the city, with six on the Eastside. North Portland-based family nurse practitioner Shelda Holmes is a provider.

(Holmes' husband, Sen. Chip Shields, and her clinic manager, is the state representative for North and Northeast Portland. He recently was named Rogue of the Week by Willamette Week for using his legislative email to ask questions about Oregon's health care proposals that appeared to relate to both his political and personal work.)

The highest provider fee is \$77 a month, with most falling around \$40.

"We're not here to make money," says Butler, who worked for the homeless non-profit Transition Projects for 12 years before landing at PPCPdx. "We're here to



Pastor Andrew Watkins

hook up human beings with healthcare resources, and not just healthcare, but wellness care."

Just seven months old, PPCPdx is up and running with 30 health care providers and 80 members. On the providers list, so far, are two medical doctors and two family nurse practitioners, along with chiropractors and naturopathic doctors, acupuncturists and massage therapists.

Carr says most doctors haven't yet heard about the co-op; word is just beginning to spread in medical circles. She was keen to sign up as a provider because she already sees many patients who have no insurance and pay

cash for services.

"It made a lot of sense to me to sign up with this plan," she says. "It's a pretty rea-

sonable model of care. When I was starting out I thought a lot about how I wanted to practice, and this fits nicely with giving providers work and giving patients a good opportunity for access to health care."

Former health industry executive Don McCormick launched Patient Physicians Cooperatives in Houston, Texas, 8 years ago. After working with physicians groups for 40 years, he agreed to help a clinic reorganize, and came up with the idea of a co-op. The Houston co-op now offers services from 49 diverse doctors. And in Hickory, N.C., the Apollo Healthcare Cooperative, opened in 2009, has grown to 600 members and offers



Morgan Butler and Tony McCormick

tor," he says.

Size matters, however, when it comes to what the co-ops can offer. The Houston co-op has partnered with hospitals, an imaging center and specialists, as well as with individual doctors. It also offers a low cost insurance that covers hospital care.

Portland's co-op needs to add members so it can offer these kinds of valuable extra benefits, Butler says.

Low-cost legal services are available now, and other optional extras can be added, as the number of members grows.

"I'd like to have 300 members signed up, because at that point we can do a whole lot more," he said. "We have a lot more buying power and people will start coming to us."

Butler says he gets a lot of questions about how co-ops work, when people get a serious illness such as cancer.

"If you do get cancer, we will advocate for you to get Medicare rates for your treatment," he says. "We can help you apply to state of the art cancer centers, like the Anderson Clinic in Houston. And if you are signed up with a primary care provider, you will have a far more personal care experience."

Jenny McCormick, daughter of co-op founder Don McCormick, co-ordinates between the three cities. She is also a breast cancer survivor. She started out with insurance through her job, she says, but had to switch to her husband's insurance when she was unable to work.

"We still ended up with big bills. That's how people spend all their life savings and

Just seven months old, PPCPdx is up and running with 30 health care providers and 80 members.

a seven-day a week urgent care clinic.

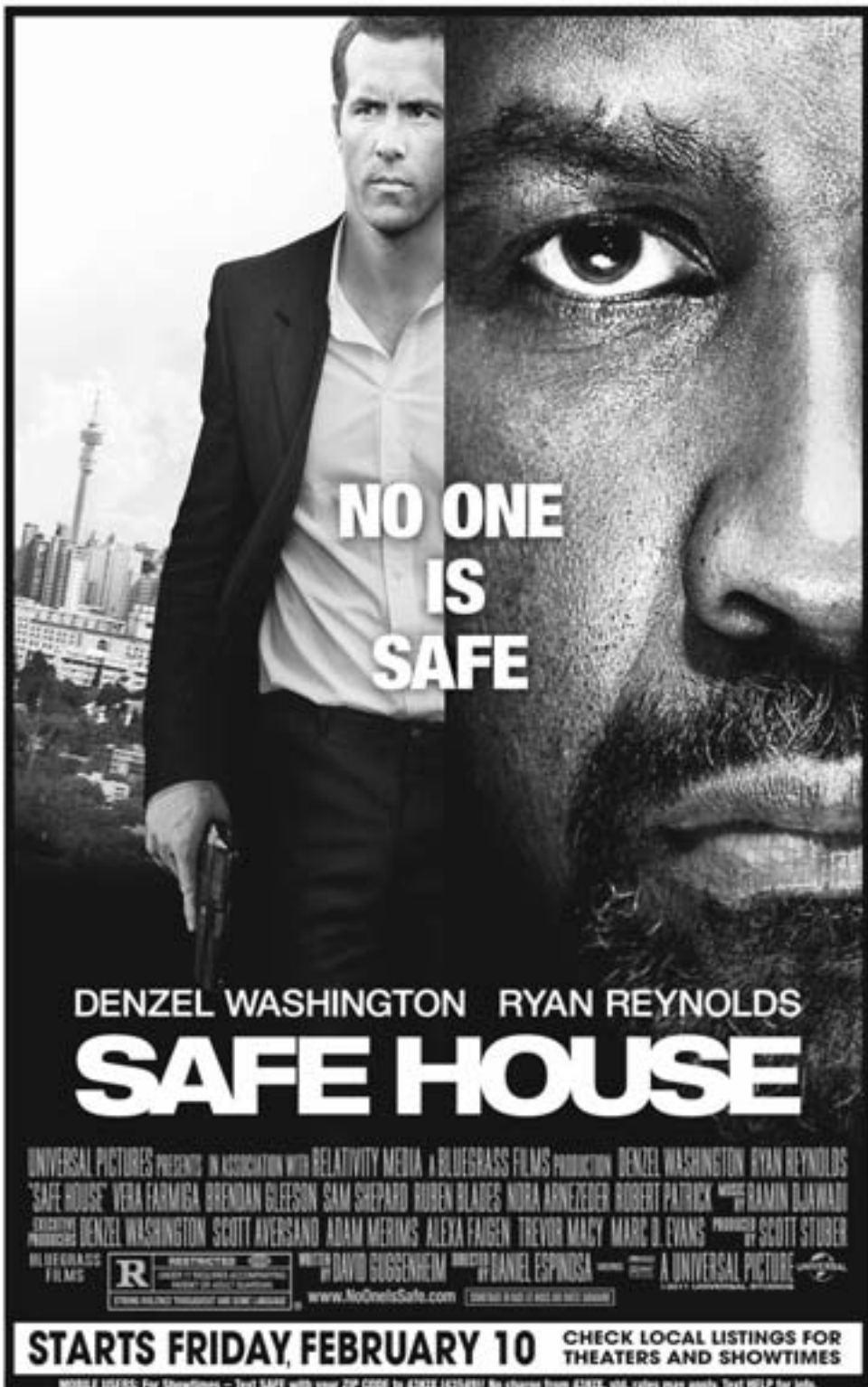
Andrew Watkins, Ph.D. senior pastor at New Directions Christian Fellowship Ministries of Houston, Texas, said his family finds the coverage works for its needs. Knowing the cost in advance and not having to pay deductibles or co-pays means families seek care earlier, he said.

"I love it: I'm an advocate for it," Watkins told The Skanner in a telephone interview. "It allows people to go see a doctor even if they don't have insurance, and not fear the cost. It allows you to focus on getting well."

Watkins says many members of his church are working but still can't afford insurance. He gave the example of a family with five children who joined the co-op and were able to take care of their medical needs.

"Nine out of 10 things can be taken care of right there in the doctor's office, and the kids get to see the same primary care doc-

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Social and Economic Justice Event

Meet Brandon Evans



February 12th at 6:00 PM
Augustana Lutheran Church
on 15th and Knott, Portland

Brandon is on staff at the International Trade Bureau, part of Rainbow PUSH Coalition, Chicago Illinois. The International Trade Bureau works to achieve parity in the American economy by building working mutually beneficial relationships between commerce and citizens on the downside of power.

An informal Question and Answer Reception to follow after the Service. **For more info call (503) 810-4354**