

## Free discount prescription drug card saves Contra Costans money

By Sandy Kleffman Contra Costa Times

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Contra Costa County residents have saved more than \$1 million on medications since a free discount prescription drug card was first offered here a year ago, county leaders have announced.

The card on average gives users a 57 percent discount on nearly 60,000 generic and brand name drugs.

All county residents, regardless of age or income, are eligible, said Patricia Tanquary, CEO of the Contra Costa Health Plan.

"We're very aware that this county has struggled with more and more people becoming unemployed and therefore uninsured," Tanquary said. But since the discount card program began, she added, "We're seeing people who can now afford their prescription medication and still have money left over for groceries and other necessities."

No questions will be asked about medical conditions, insurance or immigration status. Obtaining and using the card is free.

"It's open to as many people as wish to avail themselves of the card," Tanquary said. "We're just thrilled about the program."

People can obtain a card by going to www. coast2coastrx.com/ContraCostaCA or calling 800-931-8872. Information is available in English and Spanish.

The cards can also be picked up at some participating pharmacies, county libraries and hospital emergency departments.

County leaders say the card can provide significant savings to many residents. But health experts remind consumers

that such cards do not provide insurance, and they suggest that people be cautious about signing up for other discount health cards that may charge hefty fees and not deliver on promises.

The Contra Costa Health Plan started its program in April 2010 to help uninsured and underinsured residents.

In addition to the uninsured, others who can benefit include those with high co-pays and deductibles, or seniors who fall into a Medicare prescription drug coverage gap known as the doughnut hole, Tanquary said.

After reviewing several national prescription drug cards, county leaders selected Coast2Coast RX, offered by Financial Marketing Concepts, because it has the deepest discounts on the largest number of drugs, Tanquary said.

The cards can be used at 150 participating pharmacies in Contra Costa County, including Rite-Aid, Walgreens and CVS.

"When our residents travel, they can use their card at those same chains outside of our county," Tanquary said.

For each prescription, Coast2Coast RX pays the county health department a 75-cent royalty. That has brought in more than \$21,000 in the past year



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to help pay for medical care for the uninsured.

## Contact Sandy Kleffman at 925-943-8249.

## **DRUG Discounts**

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