

## **Presentation impresses audience**

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Outside Bliss Hall, health care and free clinics weren't on the lips of many.

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YOUNGSTOWN — Cindy Sacco of Vienna was sick, but she didn't have any health insurance.

Her daughter, who works at the Youngstown Community Health Center where the care is free, urged her mother to make an appointment.

The diagnosis quickly came back as uterine cancer.

Two weeks later, she was undergoing treatment, and within a month had surgery and radiation. Today, she gets regular checkups but is in remission.

"I'm just one story. I see it every day at the center," said Sacco, who works there part time now. "I am one of the success stories of the Youngstown Community Health Center."

"That's exactly why we need to expand them," President Bush said of the federally funded clinics, just as Sacco finished telling her story Tuesday.

Sacco was one of two patients who joined Bush and two clinic doctors for his 35-minute talk about health care at Bliss Hall's Spotlight Arena Theater at Youngstown State University.

Wants to add clinics

Bush's commitment to adding clinics around the country struck many of the approximately 200 people invited to attend.

Bush said his administration wants to add 1,200 clinics to the 3,200 already operating. About 600 have opened and Bush is asking Congress to fund the rest to meet the goal.

Dr. Lori Fitzgerald, a dentist at the clinic, and Erin Bishop, director of health education, were glad to hear Bush express a desire to expand.

"We still need more," Bishop said. "You wonder if the next presidents will come in and continue it."

Bush talked about how the clinics save money by diverting the uninsured away from expensive emergency room treatment.

"This is part of the safety net. These things make sense," he said. "This is access to health care in a practical way."

The centers serve 13 million people nationwide, Bush said, though 44 million people lack health insurance, says the American Medical Association.

#### Health workers' thoughts

Erin Farragher, a dental hygienist at the clinic, said that taxpayers are saving money and that she was happy to see Bush recognize the need.

Dr. Constantine Economus was impressed with Bush's focus on medical liability law reforms. Economus works part time at the clinic and also has his own practice.

Doctors forced out of business by high malpractice insurance costs are seeking work at such clinics, said Dr. Ronald Dwinnells, who sat next to Bush during the talk. Dwinnells is chief executive officer of Ohio North East Health Systems Inc., which operates federally funded clinics in Youngstown, Warren and Alliance.

A panel member, Dr. Compton Girdharry, had a private practice in Alliance and said he was forced out by high insurance costs. He now works at the Alliance clinic.

Thomas Humphries, president of the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, was pleased to hear Bush mention small businesses.

Bush talked about tax-free medical savings accounts and insurance risk pools for small business.

Business is dealing with health-care increases of 14 percent to 21 percent a year, Humphries said.

"It's a real, real problem. It's one of the issues I hear, literally, every day," he said. "At least I see it on the radar screen, that it's important and he's trying to deal with it."

#### Demonstrators outside

Outside Bliss Hall, however, health care and free clinics weren't on the lips of many.

Hundreds of pro-Bush and pro-John Kerry supporters — heavier to the side of Kerry, the presumed Democratic nominee in November — shouted at one another at Wick Avenue and University Plaza.

The group was a mix of young and old, students, union members and a few abortion-rights supporters.

Each side waved homemade signs and shouted slogans, from "Outsource Bush" by Kerry supporters to "Four more years" from Bush backers.

Dave Oswald, 25, of Columbiana, came to demonstrate against Bush. The war in Iraq and the economy were on his mind.

"I feel like we're over in Iraq for the wrong reasons," he said. "I think [Bush] screwed up our economy; he screwed up a lot of good things we had going for us. The middle class is really hurting right now."

YSU student Stephanie Sockel, 23, of Youngstown, agreed.

"The one thing I really don't understand is that throughout history, war is supposed to help the economy out. But our economy is absolutely horrible," she said.

Concerns for the future

George Larimer, 70, of Mercer, Pa., calls himself a die-hard Democrat worried about his future.

"I'm always worried about where my Social Security money is going to go," he said.

Cindy Cook, 55, of Youngstown came to show support for Kerry. The economy and jobs are issues most important to her.

"I have two sons. They're both working, but the one has already been told that in 2005 they [the company] are going down South," she said.

Others came to show Bush there are Republicans in the heavily Democratic Mahoning Valley, such as Barbara Zetterquist, 52, of Liberty. She said the economy and health care are important to her.

Brad Adir, 21, of Youngstown, a YSU political science student, said he came out to show support for Bush because Ohio will be so pivotal in November.

"The war is high on my priorities," he added.

Some South Range High School students and Bush supporters skipped class for a real-life lesson in politics.

Brittany Moore, 18, of Canfield, said young people need to get involved in politics. She said war, education and gay marriage were important issues to her.

Andy Grantz, 17, of North Lima, said he agrees with Bush's conservative views, especially concerning the war. He said all Kerry does is bash the president.

"I was really excited to see he was coming ... so we skipped government class to come here and have a real government experience," he added.

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