



spotlight on health care

How To Find Free Health Benefits Online

(NAPSA)—While Washington continues to debate ways to deal with America's health care problem, a group of citizens has found its own remedy for skyrocketing medical and prescription drug costs. It's started an online community where anyone can get free health benefits and share their stories and experiences.

"We know our initiative won't completely fix the health care system, but it will raise awareness and it's already helped people receive the care they needed but couldn't previously afford," says Margarita Maldonado, the program coordinator of UnitedProject, the group behind the Web site.

Here's how it works: Those who visit the site (www.unitedproject.org) and submit short stories or invite friends to join can get free prescription, medical, vision and dental benefits. All benefits can be used by an entire family and have no age or health restrictions. Also available: unlimited access to a free 24-hour Nurse Hotline, which can connect you with a registered nurse in case of emergencies or routine health concerns.

With UnitedProject not charging a fee to enroll on its Web site, how can it afford to give health benefits away for free? Officials say the community supports itself by partnering with Google AdSense to sell advertising on the site, while stressing that visitors' personal information remains protected at all times and is never shared with advertisers or anyone else. Submissions can be as any-



A free online community gives free health benefits in exchange for health-related stories.

mous as you like, and a strict privacy policy always applies.

Perhaps just as important as the ability to access free health plans, the site also provides people with an opportunity to connect with others facing similar challenges, give and receive emotional support, and chat about various topics ranging from living with high blood pressure to dealing with mounting medical debt.

"Two months ago, when I had a full-time contract position and had insurance, my doctor seemed to care about my diabetes," writes one poster. "But my contract ended and so did my insurance. I called the same doctor and explained that I was in between contracts on my job and was told that I was 'not really a patient now.'"

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are presently 46.6 million people without any health insurance coverage. For more information on how to find free health benefits online, visit www.unitedproject.org.