

My New Role: Speaking Up For America's Uninsured

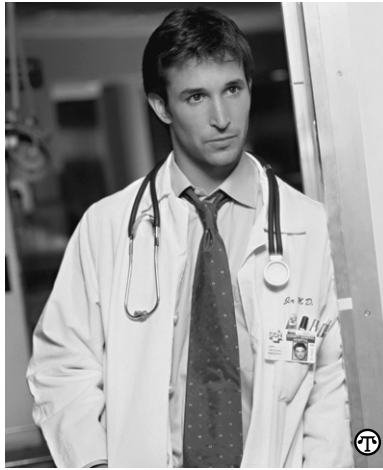
by Noah Wyle

(NAPSA)—Throughout my 10 years of work on ER, I have become increasingly aware of the plight of people who arrive in emergency rooms around our country without health insurance of any kind. These people end up in ERs sicker than they need to be, because they have been forced to delay care for more simple problems that then become true emergencies.

I only wish that these stories were completely made up by ER's writers. Sadly, the stories on the show are similar to many of the 44 million uninsured Americans throughout the United States. These are people we all know. They're teachers, farmers and small business owners. Millions of them are kids.

Being uninsured means they go without medical care when it is needed. It means minor illnesses become major ones because care is delayed. In fact, the Institute of Medicine says that close to 18,000 adults in America die each year because they are uninsured. Do I need to say anymore? This situation is a real life tragedy.

That's why I'm proud to be the national spokesperson for the *Cover the Uninsured* campaign. Co-chaired by former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, the campaign lets Americans know that they can make a difference in getting affordable health care coverage for all Americans. Organized by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and involving a diverse group of hundreds of



national and local organizations, the campaign was created to focus the nation's attention on the plight of the nearly 44 million Americans who do not have health care coverage.

In communities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, you can join with people who are just like you—doctors, nurses, business owners, religious leaders, educators, union members, employees and others who are expressing their concern about the sharply growing number of uninsured Americans.

Cover the Uninsured is for everyone, not just those who currently have no health care coverage. With so many Americans at risk of becoming uninsured, we all must play our part and get involved in this exciting campaign.

Here are a few examples of how you can join me in this effort by logging on to www.CoverTheUninsured.org:

- **Get Informed**—On our Web site, you'll find *Health Care Coverage in America: Understanding the Issues and Proposed Solutions*, an easy-to-use guide that provides basic information about the issue of the uninsured and explains approaches to solving the problem. The guide provides sample questions to ask when weighing the pros and cons of proposals to solve this problem.

- **Get Involved**—Get connected with organizations that need your help to care for the country's uninsured. Consider volunteering at a local campaign event, health clinic, public hospital or advocacy organization. Or join the national effort to enroll eligible, uninsured children and adults in available public health programs such as the State Children's Health Insurance Program or Medicaid by contacting Covering Kids and Families. More information is available at www.CoverTheUninsured.org/individuals.

- **Speak Up**—Get pointers on how to write an op-ed, how to contact your elected representatives and how to hold a health fair on www.CoverTheUninsured.org. You can also speak out on the issue by calling into a local radio talk show or by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.

I'll be playing my part in this effort by speaking at national and local events, making public service announcements and participating in other campaign activities. I hope I can count on you to play your part. When millions of Americans cannot afford health coverage, we cannot afford to remain silent.