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Student-run health clinic to hold fundraising 5K

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Hundreds of students, faculty, staff and members of the Nashville community are expected to turn out May 1 for the annual Shade Tree Trot, a 5K run through the Vanderbilt campus to benefit a medical clinic run by students in the School of Medicine.



Shade Tree Trot 2009

The race culminates yearly fundraising efforts to provide financial support for the Shade Tree Clinic's \$130,000 annual operating expenses, and it also aims to raise awareness of the clinic and its work throughout the Nashville and Vanderbilt communities. The Trot is the largest fundraising event for the Clinic, with last year's race raising \$30,000.

Ravi Patel, first-year medical student and executive director of the Shade Tree Clinic, is optimistic about this year's event.

"We hope this year's Trot will be even more successful," he said.

Started in 2004 by two first-year medical students, the Shade Tree Clinic in East Nashville provides free medical care to uninsured and under-insured Nashville residents. Operating out of a double-wide trailer, Shade Tree holds clinic hours on Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons.

In addition to providing primary medical care, the clinic offers a variety of educational programs, which the student-run board of directors is hoping to expand when the clinic relocates this December from the trailer to the nearby Foster Street Center, by incorporating a diabetes education program, a weight-loss program and an early pregnancy program.

Vanderbilt medical students manage and staff the clinic as volunteers, and undergraduate students are able to shadow the medical students when the clinic is open. This allows the students to enhance their medical education via a hands-on experience and is very rewarding for all involved.

"In the midst of completing all the academics and theory, as well as learning all the mechanisms, this is a way to reach out to a patient population that is very underserved," said Patel. "The clinic gives us an active way to learn and makes it a productive learning experience."