Cenla Medication Access Program

Connie and Mike Couvillon of Sicily Island with some of the medications they depend on daily.

'A Blessing' For Some Residents

Since its inception in 2001, the Cenla Medication Access Program (CMAP) has helped thousands of Central Louisiana residents get prescription medications for chronic medical conditions.

To people like Connie and Mike Couvillon of Sicily Island, CMAP turned their lives around by providing the medicine, education and tools they need to keep their diabetes under control.

The Couvillons were living in Marrero when Hurricane Katrina hit, so they relocated to Sicily Island to live with Connie's mother. They already were having a tough time paying for their diabetic supplies and other medications. So when Connie's new doctor told her about CMAP, their lives changed overnight.

"It's been a blessing for us. Through it all, CMAP has been there for us. They are the light in the darkness," Connie Couvillon said. "Our diabetes is under control, thanks to CMAP."

The Rapides Foundation established CMAP as three components. An outpatient pharmacy at the region's public hospital – Huey P. Long Medical Center's England Airpark Clinic thrives today. Another component, the Patient Assistance Program, involves CMAP staff working with Central Louisiana physicians in signing up eligible patients for free medications. In 2006 alone, some 1,672 people were served under the Patient Assistance Program.

A third component, the CMAP Card System, was phased out in 2005 when the federal government's Medicare Part D program helped senior citizens pay for their prescription medications.

CMAP responded in two ways: by placing a focus on people under age 65 who cannot afford their prescriptions and by establishing a central fill pharmacy, one of only a handful in the country. The pharmacy is able to quickly get medications to a large number of Central Louisiana residents by receiving bulk shipments from various drug manufacturers.

The Couvillons describe CMAP in much simpler terms: it keeps them healthy.