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Mobile clinic to move beyond Texas

HealthYes expects to serve 60K in 2009

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HealthYes President Dale Wood expects his mobile screening centers to travel beyond the Lone Star State soon.

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HealthYes hopes to expand its mobile health screening services beyond Texas in the not-so-distant future.

The Austin-based startup started serving Central Texas about 18 months ago and now operates its mobile units, which offer sophisticated cardiovascular and bone health screenings, in Houston and San Antonio. As of a few weeks ago, HealthYes also launched mobile units in the Dallas area.

With six mobile trailers running in those major markets, the startup projects that it will serve 60,000 Texans this year, HealthYes CEO Dale Wood said.

Now, the company, which has 52 employees, is looking outside the Lone Star State for growth and hopes “to fill a gap within the existing health care system for preventative care,” Wood said.

But a few things must happen before the company can roll out mobile units outside of Texas, Wood said. First, it plans to test and tweak its processes over the next few months in existing markets to make sure that they are scalable.

Another crucial piece will be financing, Wood said.

When asked about the strategy for funding the company’s out-of-state expansion, Wood said that he is working on a partnership, but he declined to disclose more details.

Since launching the company in April 2007, business has been meeting expectations, Wood said, although he did not disclose sales.

Each HealthYes mobile unit, which requires an investment of about \$235,000, has the capacity to see about 95 clients a day. The company's goal for each mobile unit is about 40 clients a day.

Clients pay \$139.95 to \$195.95 for three to five noninvasive and nonradioactive tests that screen for cardiovascular and bone health. Participants receive test results three to four business days later, which they can then share with physicians.

"We provide the facility, all the technology, the employment, know-how and community of doctors that partners with us. We provide a mini-health fair," Wood said.

So far, the company has partnered with nonprofits, churches, businesses and one local hospital on its health screening events. It is in discussions with health care providers and is receiving good feedback, Wood said. Its services are also geared toward serving corporate wellness programs.

HealthYes faces several competitors in the preventive health screening space, including San Antonio-based HealthCheckUSA, which specializes in direct-to-consumer lab testing, including cancer screenings, diabetes, cardiovascular health and DNA testing. Publicly-traded Lifetime Fitness acquired the company last year and rebranded its corporate division Total Health.

Holt Vaughan, director of operations for Total Health, said interest in health screenings is prompting new competitors.

"There is enormous potential on the consumer side, unfortunately, with the rise in uninsured. But there are also more people being proactive about their health," Vaughan said.

On the corporate wellness side, more companies are turning to health screenings as a way to minimize health care costs, Vaughan said. Total Health served about 100,000 people nationally last year. The company has a large presence in Austin through corporate clients and partners, including HEB Pharmacies.

As a young company, HealthYes is still developing its client base and target market.

"It is a lot different from what we expected in the beginning," Wood said. "We are seeing the elderly population and the uninsured."

Wood said HealthYes is also tweaking its marketing strategies based on different markets, noting that some events have not met expectations.

In markets where the company has operated longer, such as Austin and Houston, business has been stronger, Wood said.

“We expect next year to be fantastic,” Wood said. “We expect to see repeat business.”

Jon Hilsabeck, a health care administration professor at St. Edward’s University and Concordia University Texas, warns consumers to be cautious about diagnostic health screenings outside mainstream health care settings.

“How reliable is this kind of testing? Who is interpreting the test? Are they qualified?” Hilsabeck said. “If the answers are yes, then they might be a good deal.”

HealthYes health screenings are reviewed by local, board-certified radiologists, cardiologists or vascular specialists, according to the company.

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