

Sandy Springs nonprofit will offer medical care to homeless children

By Fran Memberg

A Sandy Springs-based non-profit has received a \$250,000 grant to provide medical care to homeless children.

"This project will empower mothers to do a better job of ensuring their children are healthy so they will be more productive citizens," said pediatrician Dr. Leslie Rubin of Sandy Springs, who has devoted his 35-year medical career to the treatment of children with developmental disabilities and to understanding the correlation between disadvantage and disability.

The federal health department grant to Rubin's Sandy Springs-based Institute for the Study of Disadvantaged and Disability is the first of its kind in Georgia in 17 years.

Rubin, who founded the institute in 2004, will collaborate with Mary Hall Freedom House in Sandy Springs, the Morehouse School of Medicine pediatrics department and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. He hopes the program will become a model for other programs around the country.

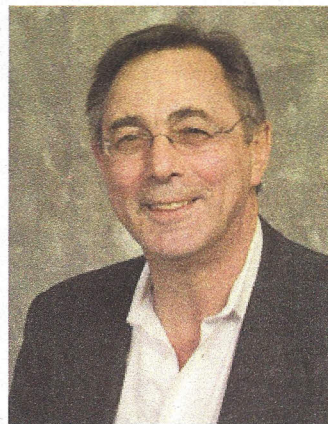
Mary Hall Freedom House is a residential recovery program that empowers women and women with children to break the cycle of addiction, poverty and homelessness. In April 2005, Lucy Hall-Gainer, founder and CEO of the Freedom House, met Rubin at a conference and asked him to provide medical care for the children living at the Freedom House. The Healthcare Without Walls project grew out of this relationship.

"Many of the children in our program do not have a pediatrician or receive regular healthcare," said Hall. "As a result, they end up going to the local emergency room even for relatively minor health problems. Healthcare Without Walls will change that by increasing access to appropriate health care while decreasing emergency room visits for non-emergencies."

Janice Nodvin, ISDD's project director, helped write the grant proposal and is coordinating administrative details required before patient care begins. The program is scheduled to open later this year at the Freedom House and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Hughes Spalding in downtown Atlanta.

Healthcare Without Walls also will assist families in finding a pediatric "medical home" near where they live, according to Rubin.

On Aug. 7, the institute will sponsor



Dr. Leslie Rubin

a community Back to School Health and Fun Fair with food, music, health screening, games and giveaways from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Mary Hall Freedom House, 200 Hannover Park Road, near the intersection of Roswell Road and Dunwoody Place. For information, call (678) 595-4854. For information about the institute, visit www.isdd-home.org

Rubin, who was born in South Africa, moved to the Atlanta area in

1994 to become director of developmental pediatrics at Emory University medical school and the medical director of the Marcus Institute, a position he held for four years. Beginning in 1998, he participated in the development of clinical programs in cerebral palsy, autism, children with sickle cell disease who have had strokes, and general child development clinics at the Hughes Spalding Children's Hospital.

Since 1998 he has been involved with the Southeast Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit at Emory and the TEAM Centers in Chattanooga, Tenn., that provide community-based services for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Rubin said his longtime observation of the cycle of disadvantage and disability led him to create the institute in May 2004. Later that year, he joined the department of pediatrics at the Morehouse School of Medicine.

Rubin said the institute seeks to "raise awareness of the challenge families face in getting good medical care."

"The more we do for children," he said, "the more we're strengthening our society by producing productive citizens."