

## Luckily I Have My Health (Mostly)

### A visit to the Lestonnac Free Clinic

By **Kat Avila, Contributing Writer** | Published on LatinoLA: July 3, 2012



This was my first time here. When I signed in, the doctor wasn't in yet. The receptionist wasn't sure how long the wait would be. Also, I didn't have an appointment. Normally, they saw patients with appointments on Mondays and Wednesdays. Walk-ins were only accepted on the first and third Saturdays of every month.

Luckily though, there had been a cancellation. I was down to less than half a pill of high blood pressure meds and needed a new prescription.

I was surprised the tiny lobby area wasn't packed with coughing and hacking poor people. Gradually, it began to fill up as patients brought their families with them. A middle-aged man slowly stood to give up his seat to a woman.

A baby boy was babbling, letting loose an occasional lung-splitting scream out of boredom. "Cállate," said the mom, then the dad repeated, "Cállate." I stared out the second-story window over the trees and watched one plane then another heading out with people going somewhere.

When I was called in to be weighed and to have my blood pressure taken, I lost my seat. Coming back out, I sat my fat butt on the plasma TV table. "Está bien, no?" I said to the woman beside me. She just smiled and nodded back. My foot bumped something. Looking down, I saw that the four-legged table was wearing thick red cartoon-like shoes, faux shoes designed to protect the carpeting.

I glanced up at the cork bulletin board behind me. Paternity testing by [DNA Services of America](#). Several tabs had been pulled off the flyer.

Another flyer was for [Lestonnac Free Clinic](#) where I was. It advertised "one-time treatments, as well as diagnosis and treatment of minor illnesses." This Tustin location opened in November 2011.

I'm not sure when the volunteer doctor snuck in, but I didn't see him until three hours after I had walked into the clinic. To kill time, a young girl J. and I had done origami using pages ripped from my bus schedule for folding paper.

It started with making paper airplanes. Then we made an opening-closing fortune-teller and played with that for awhile. It's the one with colors on the four outside squares, and numbers and written fortunes on the inside.

After puzzling over different kinds of folds, I finally was able to make a blow-up crane. You blow through a hole at the bottom to get the body to expand like a balloon. I let J. do the blowing part.

About an hour after the clinic was supposed to be officially closed, I was able to leave and do some shopping at Target. Target Pharmacy works with Lestonnac to keep the price of medications affordable.

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I took the bus home. Getting off the first bus, I felt the left side of my pants was wet. I checked the bottom of my daypack to see if my water bottle was leaking. It was dry. Great. The only thing that came to mind was someone before me had peed on the fabric-covered seat. Why hadn't I noticed earlier? Tonight was going to be a laundry night after all.

Luckily, I was wearing dark pants and it was a sunny day. By the time the second bus arrived, I was pretty much dry. Took a shower as soon as I got home.

The next morning, I opened my e-mail to discover that I had won a free audio book of my choice in a monthly drawing run by [Laurell K. Hamilton's](#) fan site. I usually never win anything. That's the reason I don't fill out those raffle tickets that Trader Joe's gives you for bringing in your own grocery bag.

Luckily, I had replied to a group-blast e-mail about which Anita Blake comic books I owned, which made me eligible for the drawing. (I own a Marvel/Comic-Con 2007 limited edition of "Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter: The First Death" #1, among others. Brazilian artist Wellington Alves did the artwork for "The First Death.")

Now, if I'm really lucky, I may even enjoy healthcare coverage again someday.

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