

Vital Signs

The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland
Health care is a right, not a privilege.



ACCESS ♦ DIGNITY ♦ HOPE



Summer 2010
Volume 3, Issue 1

Life Begins at 40!

Dear Friends,

On October 17, 2010, The Free Clinic will celebrate its 40th birthday, and we've agreed to be honorary event co-chairs. We've been actively involved with The Free Clinic in one way or another since its inception in 1970. In fact, Don has been a board member and/or officer since day one!

As we commemorate forty years of providing quality, free health care to the community, we hope you will continue to support The Free Clinic with your contributions of volunteer time and/or money. Regardless, come join us for the party! Forty years marks hundreds of thousands of lives touched, a tremendous growth in services, and countless memories. So, we look forward to all of the friends of The Free Clinic joining us. Please read on for details.

Of Note: This celebration will precede the Annual Summit of the National Association of



Sally and Don Messinger, Honorary Co-Chairs

Free Clinics, which begins October 18th in downtown Cleveland.

We hope to see you on October 17th! Remember, life begins at 40!

Don and Sally Messinger

Honorary Event Co-Chairs
40th Anniversary Celebration

It's a Milestone Birthday Party! Balloons up!

What: The Free Clinic's 40th Anniversary Celebration
Who: Everyone's invited!
Where: The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum
When: Sunday, October 17, 2010 at 6:30 p.m.
Tickets: \$125 per person, \$500 for sponsoring couples; includes various food stations and musical entertainment from The No Name Band
More Info: Call Mike Kinsella, development manager – 216.707.3418
Call Don – 216.925.2509
or Sally – 216.240.9911

Tickets for the celebration can now be purchased through The Free Clinic website:
www.TheFreeClinic.org

Helping to Mend a Broken Heart

Six years ago, Betty Wilson was stricken with unexplained bouts of chest pain, sweating, trembling, shortness of breath, and vomiting. Symptoms would arise and require frequent rests while walking with her 3-year-old son. Betty was uninsured and had no primary care physician. A community clinic diagnosed acid reflux and recommended a heartburn remedy. An emergency room doctor diagnosed asthma and prescribed an inhaler. Neither medication helped.

The episodes continued for months. Each time, Betty would lie down until the symptoms passed, and then go about her life as a single mother and administrator of a 24-hour day care center, a position she has held for 11 years.

"One of my coworkers thought I was pregnant, I was throwing up so much," said Betty, now 52.

One morning in November 2004, Betty was too ill to go to work. She called 911, and paramedics took her to a local emergency department. During a stress test, Betty wept silently. Her chest hurt so badly that she could not speak; she was having a heart attack. She underwent procedures to locate the blockage in her coronary arteries and to place a stent to ensure adequate blood flow to her heart.

For Betty, who is uninsured and earns only \$1,900 per month, accessing and affording outpatient checkups and heart medications was a major challenge. "The Free Clinic took me in

right away," Betty says. "It was a blessing."

Betty visits The Free Clinic quarterly for chronic disease management and receives seven needed medications – a value of **nearly \$600/month** – all without charge. Plavix, a blood thinner, totals \$186/month alone, rivaling the cost of her gas bill.

Since 2004, Betty has suffered another heart attack and had an additional three stents placed in her arteries. Thanks to The Free Clinic's care, her heart condition has stabilized.

Betty hopes health reform will enable the uninsured community to obtain timely, quality preventive and follow-up care. "I'm hopeful. I'm prayerful," she says.

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(L to R): Rivera-Mosquera, McFarlane, Williams, Sudano, and Modlin

Panel Discussion Tackles Health Care Disparities

A panel of recognized health professionals gathered at The Free Clinic on April 12th to discuss the inequalities minorities face in accessing the U.S. health care system. Panelists included Dr. Charles Modlin (Cleveland Clinic's Minority Men's Health Center), Dr. Evelyn Rivera-Mosquera (Ohio Latino Mental Health Network), Dr. Joseph Sudano, Jr. (MetroHealth's Center for Reducing Health Disparities), and Mr. Danny Williams (The Free Clinic).

Referencing the 2008 National Healthcare Disparities Report, panelists asserted that patient education and empowerment, as well as broader and culturally competent approaches, are essential in mitigating health care disparities. According to Dr. Rivera-Mosquera, health disparity is a failure of the one-size-fits-all approach to health care delivery. Seeing the problem more holistically means factoring in a patient's language, employment, transportation, family structure, and spiritual traditions.

Encouraging minority participation in research studies is important, added Dr. Modlin, who proposed a "health equity" model that would focus on wellness and prevention linking medical, economic, educational, civic, and spiritual resources to serve and empower communities that have been marginalized by traditional health care.

Free and open to the public, "A Conversation on Disparities in Access to Care" was moderated by Al McFarlane, the founder and CEO of Minneapolis-based *Insight News*. The program was generously sponsored and organized by Pfizer and Lesic & Camper.

A Pivotal Question

Danny R. Williams, JD, MNO
Executive Director

When President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (H.R. 3590) earlier this spring, it set in motion a series of reforms intended to provide health insurance to approximately two-thirds of the estimated 46 million uninsured U.S. residents. Although many of the key components of the Act may have little or no immediate impact on The Free Clinic's current patient base, we have begun thinking and listening to determine how we should evolve to better serve in this new environment.

For several months, an ad hoc "Positioning Committee," established by Board Chair Seth Wolf, has been reviewing possible options in light of likely changes. If the planned Medicaid expansion, insurance exchanges, and employer and individual incentives actually have their intended effect, the vast majority of our current patients and clients could become *ineligible* for care in our facility because they will have a method to pay for their care. In addition, roughly \$11 billion in funding

has been authorized to flow to community health centers, also known as federally qualified health centers, to care for this population. Under our current structure, The Free Clinic cannot apply for such funding. Now, there is a catch to community health center status — patients treated there must pay what they can based upon a sliding fee scale. That would be a significant evolutionary, maybe revolutionary, change for The Free Clinic.



Danny R. Williams

Other options are being explored, as well, including becoming a Medicaid/Medicare provider, developing closer affiliations with other complementary institutional partners, and/or continuing to focus on those populations that will inevitably continue to fall through the cracks, among others. We would love to hear your thoughts on the subject. If you have comments or suggestions about how The Free Clinic should evolve in light of health reform, send them to dwilliams@thefreeclinic.org.

MedWorks Collaboration

On May 1st and 2nd, The Free Clinic teamed up with MedWorks to host a 2-day event of free health services. MedWorks was formed a year ago to improve access to health care for Ohio's medically underserved populations by partnering with providers, corporate sponsors, and volunteers.

The mass free health care event provided nearly **2,000 services** to approximately **700 individuals** over the 2-day event. Appointments and walk-ins were accepted for medical, vision, and dental care. A variety of medical specialty services were offered, including audiology, podiatry, dermatology, rheumatology, ENT, cardiology, and others. Before discharge, every patient met with a social worker for referrals and information, and various agencies distributed community resources ranging from wellness to legal aid. The Ohio Benefit Bank connected patients with food stamps, home energy assistance, childcare subsidies, and medical benefits.

The May clinic followed a successful MedWorks/Free Clinic Dental Clinic collaboration at The Free Clinic on February 20th. In an 8-hour period, ten volunteer dentists and twenty volunteer dental assistants provided extraction services to approximately 115 patients.



Volunteers provided dental care to 275 patients May 1st and 2nd

MedWorks' Patient Services Statistics*

550.....medical patients
350.....vision screenings
300.....eye glasses
275.....dental patients
250.....HIV tests
180.....women's health patients
60.....mammograms

* preliminary data is approximate

Dennis Named Shero/Hero of Minority Health

The Ohio Commission on Minority Health hosted a celebration in Columbus on March 25th to kickoff Minority Health Month, which commenced April 1st. Hundreds attended a ceremony recognizing the unsung heroes of minority health. A longtime Free Clinic volunteer, **Vincent Dennis, MD**, received the **Shero/Hero of Minority Health** award.

After almost forty years practicing medicine, Dr. Dennis retired as the Chief of Nephrology at the Cleveland Clinic. Over the past five years, he has dedicated nearly **500 hours** of volunteer service to The Free Clinic. Dr. Dennis aims to mitigate the trend of African Americans with kidney failure, establishing a network of dialysis centers to reach



Dr. Alvin Jackson, director of the Ohio Department of Health, with Dr. Dennis

underserved communities nationwide. As Medical Director Marlene Weinstein can attest, Dr. Dennis is “a real prince of a guy.”

Leavitt Recognized for Smart Living

On April 14th, Judson at University Circle hosted a luncheon to commemorate the **2010 Smart Living Awards** in the areas of Arts, Education, Healthcare, Philanthropy, and Volunteerism. The awards celebrate individuals who are dedicated to the dynamic atmosphere of University Circle. For the second consecutive year, the community applauded the service of a Free Clinic volunteer in recognizing **Douglas Leavitt, DDS**.

In early 2000, Dr. Leavitt sold his East Cleveland practice to work full-time alongside his father, also a dentist, in the practice he'd previously assisted part-time for 24 years. His father, at age 84, retired from the father/son practice and joined the volunteer corps at The Free Clinic. He served several years until suffering a stroke at the chair side of a patient in 2006, and he passed away one month later. In his honor, Dr. Leavitt joined the volunteer corps at The Free Clinic to continue the tradition of service.



Douglas Leavitt, DDS

For the past four years, Dr. Leavitt has dedicated a couple of evenings each month to The Free Clinic, providing quality dental care while guiding and mentoring third- and fourth-year dental students from Case Western Reserve University's School of Dental Medicine. The Free Clinic's volunteer dental corps conducted nearly **2,000 extractions** last year.

“When you're in dental practice, you deal with pain and suffering. People hate going to the dentist, but the appreciation I receive on a monthly basis at The Free Clinic is quite special.” To hear Dr. Leavitt tell it, connecting to the community as he does is a natural extension of his chosen field, and a reward in itself.

Volunteer Administrator of the Year

The Forum for Volunteer Administrators recognized **Melissa Ghoston**, director of volunteer & external relations, as the **2009 Volunteer Administrator of the Year**. This award honors outstanding innovation, dedication, and perseverance in the profession of volunteer administration. The volunteer program at The Free Clinic — nearly 500 strong — provides over \$1 million of service each year.



Melissa Ghoston

Why I Volunteer:

Sheeba Joseph –
Volunteer HIV Intervention Specialist, 3 years

“It is important to help others through the often nerve-racking experience of getting an HIV test, and simultaneously offering advice for safer sexual practices improves not only the clients' well-being, but also the well-being of those around them. It is always meaningful when I can tell clients they have tested negative for HIV and I see the anxiety and worry melt instantaneously from their face.”

Mark Roth, MD –
Volunteer Physician, 20 years

“I've been involved intermittently for 20 years, and I enjoy being part of the team of health care providers. I am inspired by the idealism and dedication demonstrated by The Free Clinic staff and other volunteers with whom I have had the good fortune to serve. Given the current state of poor access to health care in this country, the need for volunteerism has never been greater.”

Courtney Batt –
Volunteer History Taker, 2 years

“I love coming to The Free Clinic every week because I feel like it is a positive way to really help a lot of people. I get a lot of satisfaction from helping our patients, and so many of them voice their appreciation of having some place like The Free Clinic to come when they need health care.”

Scott Euype, PT, DPT, OCS –
Volunteer Physical Therapist, 7 years

“Initially, PT operated literally in the hallway using portable folding tables. We now have a wonderful room and serve patients three evenings per week. I am always humbled by how committed the patients are, despite overcoming many obstacles to get here. One patient had boots so worn that he had to put plastic and cardboard inside to keep his feet dry...and he was diabetic! PT is so important to assist those that want to manage their pain and become independent.”

Linda Kerata, DDS –
Volunteer Dentist, 3 years

“It is great to see the dental students develop from apprehensive learners to confident professionals. Many have a great heart for helping others. I enjoy seeing them work in teams to help each other, too. It is a pleasure to work in such a nice environment.”

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Doc Opera Raises \$25,000!

As physicians in training, medical students of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine (CWRU SOM) and Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine (CCLCM) perform and produce beyond the classroom — literally! In December 2009, the student-run production of *Doc Opera* raised **\$25,000** for The Free Clinic — nearly doubling the 2008 proceeds. A ceremonial check was presented to Executive Director Danny Williams and Medical Director Marlene Weinstein at a party on April 23rd.

In its 26th year, *Doc Opera* features humorous musical parodies, dancing, and skits that are written, performed, and produced entirely by students and faculty of CWRU SOM and CCLCM. More than 150 participants, from the band and performers to the choreographers and stage crew, make the show possible. *Doc Opera* showcases the talents of artists in medicine, and pays homage to a longtime association between the medical schools and The Free Clinic.



Doc Opera directors present donation to Free Clinic leaders Williams and Weinstein

Special thanks to the 2009 and 2010 *Doc Opera* directors (pictured, left to right, with Williams and Weinstein): Erika Ludgrin (CCLCM '13), Tim Buetler (CWRU '13), Asha Talati (CWRU '13), Boyu Hu (CWRU '12), Chau Pham (CWRU '13), Krystyna Traudt (CWRU '13), Kathryn Muir (CWRU '12), and Jessica Brick (CWRU '12, not pictured)

Don't miss *Doc Opera 2010* on December 11th at the Lakewood Auditorium!

Health Care Hero on Staff

For the third consecutive year, The Free Clinic proudly recognizes one of our own through the *Crain's Cleveland Business* third annual **Health Care Heroes Awards**. Out of a record 104 submissions, Free Clinic Nurse Practitioner **Adriana Whelan** rose to the top in the category of *Nurse, Nonhospital Setting*.

Health Care Heroes Awards celebrate the dedication, leadership, and innovative achievements of the individuals who make Northeast Ohio *the* destination for world-class health care.

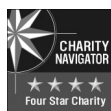
All in a day's work, Adriana provides medical care, mentors student practitioners, and

empowers patients to make responsible choices in personal health care management. Described as a "triple-threat," Adriana epitomizes the rare practitioner who excels in clinical medicine, research, and education.



Adriana Whelan, ND, RN, CFNP

Adriana, who spent close to a year as the clinic's only full-time medical practitioner, is a tireless advocate and ambassador for The Free Clinic, where she has worked for more than a decade.



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