

Vital Signs

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



ACCESS ♦ DIGNITY ♦ HOPE



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Empathy and Health Reform

Danny R. Williams, JD, MNO Executive Director

Google "empathy" and you will get over 8 million hits. Merriam-Webster defines empathy as "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another..." Until recently, empathy was generally considered a positive character trait. Today it represents a pivotal philosophical divide in the debate over health reform.

Empathy, or the lack of it, is a crucial component in healthcare. A study of medical students in the March 2008 issue of *Academic Medicine* found that student empathy scores dropped after the first year of medical school, and decreased again after their third year, when students finished their first year of clinical rotations. Lead author Bruce Newton, PhD, had assumed that student contact with patients and physician mentors would help them gain greater sensitivity, but it didn't. According to Dr. Newton, this is of concern because, among other things, "good communication skills with patients help the patient to comply with the instructions of the physician."

So what has this got to do with health reform? In order to comfortably oppose universal health care, empathy must be eliminated. We can justify excluding people from coverage if we conclude they brought their problems on themselves. We can rationalize keeping the status quo, which leaves some 46 million people out, by labeling their inclusion "socialism." And we can ignore the public health benefits of covering undocumented aliens, who may carry infectious diseases, by convincing ourselves we would never illegally cross the border to feed our own families.

Emory University biologist Frans de Waal, in his recent book *The Age of Empathy*, offers compelling evidence of altruistic behavior among primates. Stories of Bengal tigers that nurse piglets, bonobo apes that help wounded birds to fly, and seals that rescue drowning dogs necessarily raise the question: Should we be any less caring of our fellow species?



Danny R. Williams

Innovative Approach to Chronic Care

The Free Clinic has initiated a new primary care delivery mechanism as part of a national trend of innovative approaches to chronic disease management. In this new protocol, a group of patients with a shared chronic diagnosis, such as diabetes mellitus or hypertension, are invited to participate in group appointments in place of traditional individual patient encounters. The goals of this group encounter include education, peer support, accountability, and an opportunity for one-on-one interaction between the patient and provider.

The pilot group for diabetic patients, which commenced September 12, 2009, is off to a promising start. Data released from ongoing group appointments nationwide suggests improved patient satisfaction and benefit from group interchange, information sharing, and support. Pending the successful evolution of the diabetes group, the medical department will explore the incorporation of additional group appointments for hypertension and obesity, which pose significant challenges for the vast majority of chronic care patients at The Free Clinic.

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"It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life, that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself."

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Why I volunteer:

Ed Hadaway, DDS, Volunteer Dentist, 16 years

"I have been helping in the dental clinic for sixteen years and feel it is my way of giving back to my community, profession and students. I have done mission trips to South America, but soon realized our neighbors needed my help. I hope to continue as long as I am able to help."

Matt Cichocki, Volunteer Pharmacy Assistant, 1 year

"All members of this organization — from the doctors to the pharmacy staff to the volunteer director — do everything in their power to make my volunteering experience as meaningful as possible. The combination of a great team of fellow volunteers and employees, and the admirable mission of The Free Clinic, make me happy to contribute a bit of my time every week to help further the success of this organization."

Marion J. Skalweit, MD, PhD, Volunteer Physician, 1½ years

"I am amazed at the wide range of patients that I see — everything from young gay men newly diagnosed with HIV/AIDS to true survivors of the epidemic, people who have been receiving anti-retroviral treatment for nearly two decades. They are artists, students, former DJs, people involved in the theater, nurse aides, and people who have battled and overcome addictions. I am always thrilled when my patients 'graduate' to other care options, although I know they are receiving great care at The Free Clinic."

Molly Martin, LISW-S, Volunteer Therapist, 4 months

"I'm privileged and inspired by the opportunity to play a role in my clients' journeys toward healing and growth. I appreciate the support I receive from The Free Clinic's dedicated staff and volunteers. It's a challenging and fun place to work!"

Volunteer Services Top \$1 Million in Value

As The Free Clinic approaches its 40th anniversary in 2010, we reflect on the many changes and also the steady constants of our course. In the early '70s, the clinic served young adults mainly for venereal diseases, birth control, and drug problems. Today, we are the medical home to more than 3,000 adults challenged with multiple chronic conditions and serve thousands more in need of dental, mental health, and substance abuse services.

While socioeconomic factors have varied the patient population over the last four decades, key principles directing The Free Clinic have remained constant. Perhaps one of the greatest of these constants has been the stream of dedicated volunteers who devote hours, weeks, and sometimes years of their time to serving the uninsured community. They range in age, skill, and experience, and each one becomes part of the lasting legacy of volunteerism that has fortified The Free Clinic since the very start.

For Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09, which spans 7/1/08 through 6/30/09), the value of volunteer services at The Free Clinic totaled an impressive **\$1,027,993.63**. This figure represents the amount that we would otherwise incur in additional personnel costs in order to treat more than 10,000 patients we serve on average.

In the past year, volunteers contributed over **32,000** hours of service. They answered phones, washed windows, counseled patients, sorted medications, extracted teeth, hosted fundraisers, attended health fairs, and treated ailments. Compared to FY08, we garnered twice as much support in FY09 from volunteer dentists, registered nurses, and behavioral health student interns. Both Syringe Exchange Program and Substance Abuse Treatment volunteerism quadrupled thanks to new intake workers and group counselors. The volunteer-run physical therapy clinic doubled in value as services expanded to three evenings per week in FY09, and contributions from Medical Assistant student externs tripled from FY08. Even administrative volunteer support doubled this year as more individuals expressed a willingness to help out wherever needed during these challenging economic times.

Through The Free Clinic's direct patient care, external relations, and advocacy work, we continually assert the fundamental belief that "health care is a right, not a privilege." Individuals interested in signing on to support our endeavors are encouraged to contact Director of Volunteer and External Relations, Melissa Ghoston, at (216) 707-3438 or beavolunteer@thefreeclinic.org.

Volunteers Earn Notable Recognition

Volunteers at The Free Clinic have been honored with several awards this year. Volunteer **Lynne Wiseman** was recognized with a Judson Smart Living award for her twelve years of service to The Free Clinic. The award applauds individuals who have made key contributions to the University Circle community. Ms. Wiseman has served as a volunteer therapist while pursuing her PhD in Counseling Psychology, as well as a volunteer nurse and Patient Advocate to promote health literacy and biopsychosocial management of chronic disease.

For the second consecutive year, The Free Clinic was heralded as a winner of *Crain's Cleveland Business* magazine's Health Care Heroes Awards. In the Volunteer category, dentist **Edward Jimenez, DDS**, was acknowledged for more than fifteen years of volunteer contributions to the dental department. The evening extraction clinic relies entirely on the dedication of volunteer



Free Clinic Dental Director Samir Ridha, DDS, and Edward Jimenez, DDS

dentists who supervise and mentor third- and fourth-year students from Case Western Reserve University's School of Dental Medicine.

Funds and Friends for The Free Clinic

It has been a busy year for the Associate Board. In addition to a number of "Dine out for The Free Clinic" events at local restaurants, participation in the AIDS Walk, SpinFest, and other events, the Associate Board created two new annual events in 2009.

First, the Associate Board hosted a benefit at the Beachland Ballroom in February, where hundreds of people turned out to see four local bands perform some great live music. The neighboring Waterloo 7 Studio and Gallery made the event bigger and better by displaying original artwork at the Beachland with proceeds from the sales going to benefit The Free Clinic. The event was such a success that we will be doing it again on **February 12, 2010**. Mark your calendars now!

Second, the Associate Board hosted a Free Clinic Night at Progressive Field on September 11, 2009.

Again, hundreds of people came out in support to raise money and awareness for The Free Clinic. Associate Board President **Kip Bollin** got to throw out the first pitch, and Executive Director Danny Williams was interviewed on the Jumbotron during the game! We aim to repeat this success with the Indians in 2010.

Coming soon: The Associate Board will once again be hosting its annual **MICROBREW EXTRAVAGANZA** on **November 13, 2009**. This marks the event's twelfth year, and a record eleven brewers plus a live band will keep the crowd entertained at Massimo da Milano's on the corner of West 25th Street and Detroit Avenue, just west of downtown. Tickets for the event are available at www.thefreeclinic.org. We hope to see you there!

The Associate Board is an exciting and engaging



Take me out to the ballgame — the Associate Board

group committed to promoting The Free Clinic and raising funds to support the organization. If you would like to get involved with this active group of volunteers, please contact Development Manager, Mike Kinsella, at mkinsella@thefreeclinic.org.

Donor Spotlight

A Monthly Commitment, a Lasting Legacy

Like most people, Bob Wardega tackles his stack of bills at the start of each month, signing checks to a number of vendors and service providers. When he has settled his tab with utilities and credit card companies, Bob writes one more check — made payable to The Free Clinic.

For twenty years, Bob has made monthly donations to The Free Clinic. Formerly a Catholic priest, Bob lost health care coverage when he left the priesthood in 1988. Uninsured for a year and a half, Bob sought a number of medical services at The Free Clinic.

"I couldn't find anywhere else that I could get help at that time. I was grateful that you guys were there when I needed it," he recalls.

When his finances improved in 1989, Bob began donating to The Free Clinic as a form of remuneration for the quality care that he had received. Each month, he'd send a



Donor Bob Wardega

modest check — maybe \$10 or \$20 at a time — as a gesture of thanks. Twenty years later, Bob continues to support The Free Clinic in this manner.

Bob has been employed for seven years as a staff accountant at the I-X Center in Cleveland. Aware that many Free Clinic patients lack the capacity to donate toward the services rendered, Bob hopes that his contributions defray costs to keep quality care accessible to those in dire financial circumstances.

Saint Luke's Foundation Honored

Every October, the Ohio Association of Free Clinics (OAF) recognizes key supporters with a Partnership Award and a Champion of Free Clinics Award. Last year, former Free Clinic Board Chair John Ball, DDS, was honored for his volunteer and board leadership contributions. This year, The Free Clinic and North Coast Health

Ministries successfully nominated Saint Luke's Foundation for the Partnership Award. Saint Luke's will receive the award at the OAF annual conference in Columbus, Ohio. Since 1999, Saint Luke's Foundation has awarded an impressive \$900,000 in direct support to The Free Clinic. This funding has been essential to The Free

Clinic's fiscal stability during very challenging economic times. Additionally, Saint Luke's Foundation funding supported capacity expansion initiatives for The Free Clinic, including outreach endeavors and the adoption of broadened clinic hours for increased community access.

Collaborations Boost Dental Department Efficiency

Collaborative efforts with area institutions and programs have been key to expanded patient services in the dental department at The Free Clinic. Case Western Reserve University's School of Dental Medicine continues to be a prominent contributor, and periodontal residents and graduate level students in the Advanced Education in General Dentistry program (AEGD) serve monthly in the evening extraction clinic. In the daytime, instructors and students from Cuyahoga Community College administer dental hygiene services at The Free Clinic, and externs from Cleveland Institute of Dental-Medical Assistants spend six weeks attaining both skill training and technical

education on equipment and devices.

Not only has the dental department received accolades from area institutions, but our reputation has achieved international notoriety, as well. Over the summer, a German dental student from the University of Charite in Berlin, Germany, spent six weeks with The Free Clinic after reading about our world-renowned mission and principles. Further, in an ongoing effort to proliferate professionalism, the dental department has launched a new series of seminars offering continuing education credits for volunteer providers in dental medicine.

In the past year, the dental department's provider corps was significantly bolstered with volunteer dentists and hygienists, as well as an array of student trainees. The value of dental volunteer services nearly doubled from FY08, totaling close to **\$100,000**.

The dental department offers restorative care during the weekdays and extractions in the evenings. Emerging successfully from the pilot phase of The Free Clinic's Expanded Hours initiative, additional assessment and extraction services are now offered two Saturdays per month.

Farewell to a Familiar Smile

Alan Gray, DDS – 1933-2009

On October 4, 2009, volunteer dentist Dr. Alan Gray unexpectedly passed away, leaving a discernible void in the Cleveland community in which he served. Dr. Gray contributed nearly a decade of volunteer service to The Free Clinic's dental department. Our staff, patients, and the countless students he's mentored will long remember his noble deeds, loving heart, and inimitable spirit with the utmost gratitude.



Dr. Gray and his wife, Carol

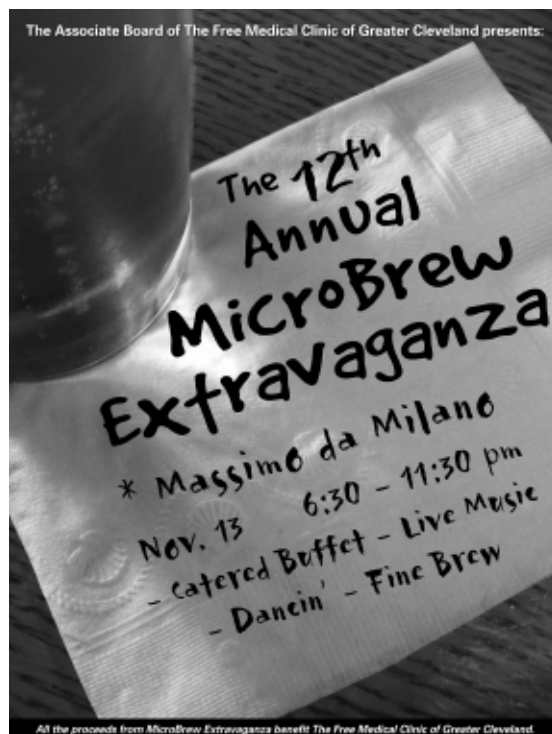
Volunteers Needed!

Calling friends near and far, old and new! In the fall of 2010, The Free Clinic will celebrate **40 YEARS** of providing health care free of charge to the underserved in Northeast Ohio. Volunteers are needed to assist in planning activities to commemorate this important milestone and to help sell tickets for the culminating social event. For more information, please contact Development Director, Gabrielle Love, at (216) 707-3403 or glove@thefreeclinic.org.

Employment Opportunities at The Free Clinic:

Director of Behavioral Health Physician
Nurse Practitioner
Dental Clinic Coordinator

Complete job descriptions can be found at www.thefreeclinic.org. To learn more about these positions, please contact Human Resources Manager, Jolynda Gibbs, at (216) 707-3411 or jgibbs@thefreeclinic.org.



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