

The Free Clinic Times

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Free Clinic Impact Stories...

*Melissa Canney, Executive Director
Madison County Health Partners*

Madison County holds dearly to its rural charm and small town attributes even though it is less than a 40 minute drive to three larger Ohio cities; Columbus, Dayton and Springfield. Ask anyone who lives there and they will tell you they have the best of 'both worlds'...easy access to city life as well as safe neighborhoods and friendly, caring neighbors.

Several years ago local citizens and community leaders came together to form Madison County Health Partners, or MCHP. The purpose of MCHP was to extend a helpful, loving hand to members of the community who were living without health insurance by opening a free health clinic.

MCHP was fortunate to have volunteer pharmacist Beth Fordyce at our opening night: August 1, 2005. MCHP was even luckier when this same pharmacist came back for nearly every clinic until September of 2007. Beth, also a director of pharmacy for Madison County Hospital, took responsibility for the free clinic medication sample cabinet. She offered instructions and information to patients as they

were discharged from their medical visit.

Over time, physicians came to rely on Beth, with her vast knowledge and helpful information about prescribing the most effective medicine at the most affordable price. When asked about her service at MCHP, Beth answered, "The free clinic is just an extension of taking care of those uninsured community members who have the need for health care. How can we ignore the suffering of our neighbors when we

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In the fall of 2007, when Beth's husband suffered a terrible accident, undergoing



Top: Beth Fordyce; Bottom Left: Randy Crisp; Bottom Right: Ernie Sparks.

numerous surgeries and months of rehabilitation, MCHP found itself without one of its most dependable and valuable resources. Thank goodness for those small town attributes, because when MCHP executive director Melissa Canney called two local retail pharmacists, Ernie Sparks, of Ernie's Medicine Shoppe, and Randy Crisp, of CVS, to ask for help, they agreed without hesitation.

Ernie and Randy were happy to assist the free clinic and step in for their colleague. Between the two men, they have volunteered at every clinic over the past four months. Beth is returning to the volunteer schedule, but she is now the lone pharmacist as her friends Ernie and Randy will rotate volunteer time. Ernie said of his service with MCHP, "it's nice to work together with people who share a common goal. What it all boils down to is this: the only thing that matters are people." Beth, Ernie and Randy all live and work in Madison County and consider it an honor to serve their friends and neighbors.

MCHP volunteers provide invaluable time and service to uninsured residents of our community, and fortunately, we have over 60 years of pharmaceutical experience to offer as well!

OAFc Introduces New Staff

The Ohio Association of Free Clinics recently hired an Executive Director as well as a new Program Assistant.

Following the resignation of former Executive Director, Amy Rohling McGee, the Association hired Marjorie Frazier, Ph.D. in September, 2007. Margie comes to the OAFc most recently from Capital University, where she held several positions. During her seven years there, Margie was an Associate Professor of Social Work, Associate Director of the National Center for Adoption Law and Policy, and Executive Director of the Center for Lifelong Learning.

A native of Ohio, Margie graduated from The Ohio State University and went on to earn her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration. While there, she held a fellowship from the National Institute of Mental Health. Margie has since worked in several social service fields including clinical mental health and policy and program development in the areas of child welfare, mental health, and primary care for vulnerable populations.

Margie has valuable experience in fundraising and development, and hopes to use her expertise to help the Association move forward. She loves her job and is honored to be a part of the OAFc.

Laura Pridgeon was hired as the full-time Program Assistant in November.

Her duties include administrative support, correspondence with clinics, Tobacco Grant reporting, special event coordination, and proposal writing.

Laura studied Social Work and Spanish at Hope College in Michigan, and spent the year following her graduation in Zambia, Africa. She was involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and care initiatives with a faith-based non-profit. She was recently married and moved to Columbus, where her husband is attending The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

Laura has enjoyed working with the OAFc thus far, and looks forward to ways that her interests—social justice, international development, and health care—continue to intersect with the mission of the free clinics.

Ohio Health care Coverage Reform Initiative: OAFc at the Table

In August of 2007, Governor Ted Strickland announced the formation of a program to review comprehensive health care reforms for Ohio.

was formed to advise the original SCI team as they develop a comprehensive plan to address these goals.

The goals of the Ohio reform initiative are to:

- Provide access to quality, affordable health insurance for every Ohio child and reduce the number of total uninsured Ohioans by 500,000 by 2011.
- Increase the number of small employers that are able to offer coverage to their workers.



Since its inception, the advisory and SCI groups have met at least monthly to develop possible models to reach the Governor's goal of covering a half million more of Ohio's uninsured. Other state models from Massachusetts' 'Connector' Model to New York's 'Reinsurance Model' have been looked at as possibilities for Ohio. An actuarial firm has been hired to inform the group about which models are more likely to work in Ohio and how much they will cost.

This effort stemmed from Ohio's participation in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's State Coverage Initiatives (SCI) program. Ohio was one of 14 states selected for this opportunity. Ohio sent a delegation, made up of 12 business, consumer advocate, legislative and state government representatives.

The OAFc, along with two dozen other stakeholders from hospital, union, insurance, medical, state government, advocacy and policy organizations,

For additional information about the initiative, visit www.healthcarereform.ohio.gov. This is a great resource for a variety of information about coverage initiatives here and across the country. There is also a consumer input page. Feel free to contact Margie Frazier, the OAFc representative to the advisory group at mfrazier@ohiofreeclinics.org.

Letter from the President

Paul Baumgartner, Lorain County Free Clinic

Dear Friends and Members of the Ohio Association of Free Clinics:

On behalf of the Board of the OAFc, Happy New Year 2008! It's amazing; the OAFc is now entering its eighth year, serving the needs of 38 member free clinics as well as uninsured patients statewide. Our new Executive Director, Marjorie Frazier, has transitioned into her role as state leader of our association extremely well, carrying forward the important work and vision previously established.

More importantly, Margie has brought to the OAFc her energy and clear vision of what needs to happen in the coming year and into a fast approaching future. She quickly hired a very qualified Program Assistant, Laura Pridgeon, who brings to the Association experience in community development and non-profit work. We also welcome the Midlothian Free Health Clinic and Middleburg Heights Neighborhood Care Center.

And, of course, we hold on to our dear friends of the past, those who have helped bring us this far, and who continue to believe in and support the mission of the organization.

This year will not be just any year. It may be the beginning of the most important and pivotal year in the history of the OAFc. The list of our accomplishments is long. The vision list of what needs to be accomplished, or what might be accomplished for the well being of the OAFc and the people it serves, is much longer. I say, "might be accomplished," because meeting our goals and mapping our direction is going to take all of us within the Association. Questions linger. What are the needs of the OAFc after Tobacco Securitization? How will elections impact our work?

The work by many that established our credibility and sincerity, and that created awareness in the legislature and with state department leaders must continue. The OAFc will soon have another Legislative Advocacy Day in April. Have you met with your legislators? Now is the time to re-connect. Share the plight of the uninsured. Invite them to visit and to meet firsthand someone who is uninsured. Meet with those who lobby for their local nurses' association or hospital? We are reminded and obligated to share that we are here to serve people, to bring hope and healing.

Meet with the media, remind them of your needs and share

your clinics' successes. Be sure to highlight the work being done in Columbus, on behalf of you and all of the clinics throughout our state.

And at the top of the list, seek out new funding sources that share our common purpose. Economic conditions and competition for a thin charitable dollar has all of us rolling up our sleeves.

Are you a member of a standing committee of the Association? Opportunities to express creativity, share your expertise and opinions are vital for growth if we are to move forward and remain a viable cause statewide.

Now is the time. Please join us as we continue our journey already in progress.

Paul Baumgartner
President, OAFc



***For time and the world
do not stand still.
Change is the law of
life. And those who look
only to the past or the
present are certain to
miss the future.***

-John F. Kennedy

8th Annual OAFC Conference a Great Success

October 7 through 9, 2007 marked the eighth annual gathering of free clinic staff, directors, volunteers and others who work on behalf of patients across Ohio—and the nation. We welcomed 110 participants including out-of-state colleagues like Dr. Jim Spears of the Al Hirschfeld Free Clinic for Actors in New York City!

Each day was filled with great speakers, informational workshops, and additional discussions during fun receptions and meals shared together.

The plenary session on day 1, Covering the Uninsured, was presented by Greg Moody, former Medicaid director for Ohio and currently a senior associate with Health Management Associates, and Doug Anderson, assistant director of Health Policy for the Ohio Department of Insurance. Their presentations helped audience members learn the basics of health care coverage as well as current demographics of the uninsured in Ohio. In-depth roundtable discussions followed as participants talked about how covering the uninsured in Ohio would affect free clinics.

After this energetic start, work-

shops on clinic operations, fundraising, disease management, and a variety of other topics rounded out the day.

On Monday evening, we celebrated with our OAFC Award Winners; Tom Kelly, administrator of Cleveland Clinic Wooster, and the Cleveland Clinic Wooster Hospital, for their combined support of the uninsured in Wooster, Ohio. Tom and his team have developed a

strong network of support with the Viola Startzman Free Clinic, directed by John Moritz. We were happy to honor Tom with the Champion

of Free Clinics Award and Cleveland Clinic Wooster with the Free Clinic Partnership Award this year. Congratulations and thanks to them and to the good work of Viola Startzman Clinic!

Day 2 brought us more great workshops and networking. The day ended with our final luncheon keynote by Director Sandra Stephenson of the Ohio Department of Mental Health. She stressed the importance of the continued need for partnership between health and mental health systems in patient care, especially for those who lack insurance or access to services.



Joyce Bourgault, of Helping Hands Health and Wellness Center, with Board Member, Katie Clark.



Paul Baumgartner, John Moritz, Sharon Kelly, Tom Kelly, Deb Miller, and Margie Frazier.



Board Members Elaine Ewald and Susan Labuda Schrop, with presenter Brian Pendleton.



Doctors Ted Wymyslo and Keith Holten.

Thank you to the OAFC Education Committee, Sheila Fox, our conference planner, and all of the volunteers who made this our best conference yet.

OAFC Welcomes New Member Clinics

As we begin 2008, the Ohio Association of Free Clinics is happy to extend our membership to new areas of the state with two new clinics. We now have 38 clinics, serving 37 counties in Ohio.

Midlothian Free Health Clinic (MFHC)

The Midlothian Free Health Clinic in Youngstown, will open its doors on March 27, 2008. The clinic will serve an uninsured population not previously targeted, with a mission to "offer free quality health care to the uninsured living along the Midlothian corridor." MFHC plans to offer primary, preventative, and educational health care to individuals between the ages of five and 64, whose income qualifies them for services. A volunteer board, under the direction of interim executive director, R. Allen Sinclair, currently administers the clinic. The clinic will begin with a target to reach 50 clients during two, four-hour sessions per month. As the need grows, so will their outreach. For more information, contact the clinic at 330-788-8797.

Southwest General Neighborhood Care Center

An extension of Southwest General Hospital, the Neighborhood Care Center (NCC) recently opened in Middleburg Heights. The clinic sees patients two evenings each week for primary care, and offers a host of other services, including a gynecology clinic and a diabetes clinic, meeting once a month and once a quarter, respectively. The clinic sees adults who live within their taxing district and meet their income guidelines. Currently the NCC is operating with the help of about 30 volunteers, one medical director, and two part-time paid staff. Since inception, they are happy to have been completely supported by Southwest General Health Center. Contact Carol at csizer@swgeneral.com or 440-816-6444 for more information.



Tax Season Triggers Financial Squeeze For Many Ohioans

By Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, Executive Director, Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks

Eligible Ohioans can file taxes free this year with Ohio Benefit Bank

Each year, many eligible taxpayers in Ohio miss out on getting

free tax preparation assistance because they either don't know it is available or they don't know where to get this valuable service. The Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks (OASHF) and the Ohio Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives are joining efforts this tax season to educate and help low- and moderate-income Ohioans obtain free federal and state income tax return preparation assistance and avoid paying high

preparation fees charged by some organizations.

The service is one of many offered by the Ohio Benefit Bank (OBB), a Web-based, counselor-assisted program that connects low- and moderate-income individuals with access to potential work supports. Free income tax preparation assistance is available to working families and individuals in Ohio whose household income is less than \$54,000 per year.

Individuals can find out if they are eligible for free tax preparation assistance by:

- Going to one of the state's 120 Benefit Bank sites and clinics. At these sites and clinics, trained counselors will help Ohioans prepare and file their tax returns at no cost if they meet income eligibility requirements. There are no fees to apply, and refunds can be

quickly obtained.

- Calling the Ohio Benefit Bank toll-free at 1-800-648-1176.
- Visiting the Ohio's Benefit Bank's new free online, self-service program at www.OBB.Ohio.Gov. With electronic filing, clients can receive their refund in as few as seven to 10 days.

By having taxes prepared through OBB, taxpayers also may determine their eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which directs more of the tax refund back to the individual. Ohioans can also determine eligibility for other work supports, such as health care coverage, home energy assistance, child care subsidies and food stamps.

To locate an OBB site nearest you, call 1-800-648-1176 or visit www.OBB.Ohio.Gov.





Ohio Association of Free Clinics

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Dates To Remember:

April 23, 2008:
OAFAC
Legislative
Advocacy Day

April 27-May 3, 2008:
Cover the Uninsured Week

October 12-14, 2008:
Ninth Annual OAFAC
Conference



Cover the Uninsured Week: April 27 - May 3, 2008

Did you know that 47 million Americans, including more than 9 million children, are living without health care coverage? In Ohio, more than 1 million people lack health insurance. It's time to start planning for the sixth annual Cover the Uninsured Week and help get America covered.

There are many ways for you and your clinic to get involved in Cover the Uninsured Week 2008:

- Host an enrollment event at a hospital, community center or school
- Organize a health coverage forum with community, business and faith leaders
- Plan a seminar for small business owners
- Distribute information about available low-cost and free health coverage programs to uninsured individuals and families

We are happy to support your efforts! Please inform the OAFAC of any events your clinic or community are planning around Cover the Uninsured Week. Call (614) 221-6494 or email lpidgeon@ohiofreeclinics.org.