



The Free Clinic Times

Free Clinic Impact Stories...

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A Day on the Bus *Teresa Allton, Nurse Practitioner The Breathing Association Free Lung Health Clinic*

"Ed, is the coffee done yet?" Karen bellows to carry her voice to the front of the bus over the cranking up of the generator. "Of course, my dear, the coffee is ready. And to delight your taste buds, I've brought you freshly baked maple flavored long johns from Der Dutchman in Plain City!" "Yummm, we love you Ed! And our hips hate you, Ed!" chimes the rest of mobile medical unit staff as they prepare for another day on the bus.

Our day starts an hour before the first client comes aboard The Breathing Association's Lung Health Clinics mobile medical unit. Unofficially, but affectionately, called the CJ I by the clinic staff, our mobile medical unit was constructed on a thirty-eight foot 2007 W-series workhouse chassis. It is a fully equipped clinic with two exam rooms, reception area, lab and treatment area, bathroom, and portable x-ray machine. She needs to be parked and leveled, with coffee pot dripping and all systems "go", each day before the staff can begin operations. Spirometers, barometers, and sphygmomanometers all need to be calibrated, balanced, zeroed, and brought to room temperature before the first client appointment at 9:00am. The staff brings on their laptops, lab supplies, charts, routine supplies, and of course lunch each time the bus prepares to venture out on a "neighborhood mission."

We spend the next six hours taking care of clients. The patients served on the mobile lung clinic are residents of Franklin

County who have no insurance or are underinsured. They meet eligibility requirements to receive free care on the bus if they are at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level. A nurse practitioner, clinical nurse specialist, office manager, asthma educator, respiratory therapist, smoking cessation counselor, and driver/security officer staff the mobile lung clinic each day. We offer ongoing lung health care, comprehensive assessments and physicals, lung health testing, chest and abdominal x-rays, asthma and COPD education and outreach services, smoking cessation counseling, prescription assistance, and links to other health and community services.

It has been an awesome experience not only to develop the Lung Health Clinic and mobile medical unit, but to finally put a dream into reality and deliver health care services to the community. The planning and implementation for both the clinic and the bus took about 12 months, and the collective effort of many staff members and funding sources.

Was it worth the effort? Absolutely. The first day on the bus, we diagnosed two people with diabetes; neither knew they had the disease because they had not been to a physician in over two years! We have already seen multiple cases of asthma, bronchitis, and upper respiratory infections. Most of our clients are current smokers with smoking related problems. If you were to generalize our population, we serve mostly female, African-Americans between the ages of 18 and 64, who are uninsured or underinsured and cannot

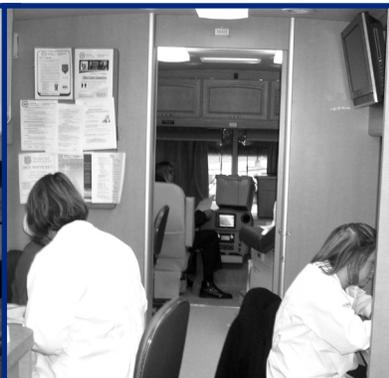
afford to see a physician regularly. Many of our patients routinely use the ER for services.

IMPACT Community Action in Franklin County works in partnership with The Breathing Association to provide our services to the community. IMPACT funded the mobile unit and makes arrangements with other community agencies to provide services to citizens in need. With the current economic conditions in the United States and the increasing unemployment rate in Ohio, we are sure that the population without insurance that needs medical care will continue to increase. These types of partnerships will prove to be advantageous not only to the community they serve, but for non-profit agencies as they share limited funding.

The last client usually disembarks around 3:30 p.m. and the cleaning frenzy begins. The entire crew pitches in to wipe down surfaces with disinfectant, run the sweeper, empty the trash, pack up equipment, and of course turn off the coffee pot. The clinical nurse specialist heads out to return equipment to the office as the nurse practitioner helps the driver maneuver out of the designated parking spot de jour. The bus makes its journey back to the secured parking area on the northwest side of Columbus where she remains until her next "neighborhood mission."

IMPACT reports customer feedback indicates clients are grateful for the service, appreciate the level of care they receive. Was it really worth all the effort?

Absolutely!



Message from the Executive Director

Marjorie Frazier
O AFC Executive Director



Dear Friends,

A year has passed since the O AFC board invited me to be the new executive director. It's all true about time – it flies, it heals, and it most definitely marches on.

As the Association marched on in the last year, I have been heartened time and time again by the fine work of each of our 41 member clinics. The kindness, resourcefulness and genuine compassionate regard for those who have lost their insurance coverage are truly inspiring to me.

At this year's conference, I told our attendees that I speak all over the state about their work. And what I tell people is that the work of our volunteer medical professionals is kind and valiant – *intrepid* – Webster's would say, "characterized by resolute

fearlessness, fortitude, and endurance." So true in their case. These clinics are a state treasure.

In the next year, I, along with the board and volunteers, will be working on a variety of initiatives to preserve and enhance these great medical resources at a time Ohio most needs them. Some of them you will read about in the next few pages. As we welcome new members of the Ohio Legislature and Congress, we will be talking with them about how they can work with us to help their constituents as they come through hard economic times. We will be inviting new partners into our work from business, faith and education to help us do our best work. And we hope you will be right next to us.

For now, I say thanks for a great year and for your support in the year ahead!

Be well,

Margie

OOA Initiative

In partnership with the Ohio Optometric Association (OOA), the Ohio Association of Free Clinics is piloting a comprehensive Children's Vision Screener Training Program for underserved children throughout the state. Planning and development for the project began in July 2008, and we will begin training volunteer screeners in January 2009.

The six-hour hands-on training will provide Free Clinic staff, volunteers, preschool and child care staff and others with a standardized set of skills and

knowledge to accurately detect eye and vision health conditions in preschool children. Volunteers will be trained to use both the SureSight Autorefractor and a specialized Lea Crowded Symbols Visual Acuity Test developed for use at 5 feet.

The volunteers will be equipped to properly refer children with potential vision problems to doctors and ensure that follow-up care is provided and follow-up appointments are kept.



9th Annual Conference Attendees "Equipped to Heal."

2008's conference attendees said 'it was the best yet.' We couldn't agree more. New and veteran clinic staff and volunteers joined together in Dublin, Ohio October 12-14 to celebrate another year of success in service to Ohio's uninsured. Throughout the three days, attendees were treated to fantastic presentations on clinic management, development and health policy. We welcomed 18 exhibitors who shared their latest products and diverse services.



L to R: Danny Williams, Dr. John Ball, and Dr. Keith Holten

Speakers from free clinics, like John Moritz from Viola Startzman Free Clinic in Wooster and Lee Elmore from North Coast Health Ministry, shared the stage with their local hospital collaborators, Bill Sheron, CEO of Wooster Community Hospital and Jack Gustin, President of Lakewood Community Hospital near Cleveland. They coached audience members on how to develop working relationships in local communities to develop a network of care that is beneficial to patients and free clinics as well as hospitals.

As clinics work harder to meet the great demands of serving more patients, they were heartened to learn more of the ins and outs of media relations, fundraising plans, branding and the art of donor cultivation.

We were thrilled to honor three important and stalwart friends of Ohio's free clinics at the awards luncheon on Monday. Garry Beltz received the President's Award for his work in spearheading "Karon's Law" to expand drug repositories in the state. The Free Clinic Partnership Award went to The George Gund Foundation for their ongoing belief and support of the work of the Association to advocate for the uninsured. Finally, the audience heard first-hand from the winner of the Champion of Free Clinics award, Dr. John Ball, D.D.S., who volunteers at the Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland, and is also the president of the board of that organization. Dr. Ball shared his experiences volunteering in the dental clinic for the past 10 years and how they have shaped his approach to caring for all patients, regardless of their ability to pay.



L to R: Kathy Trace, Ann Fisher, Margie Frazier, and Rebekah Gee

\$200,000 WellPoint Foundation Grant Supports Free Clinics in Wellness Initiative

In the coming weeks, the Ohio Association of Free Clinics will again award grants to several clinics around the state that will help their patients develop and maintain healthier lifestyles. Through education and coaching, community partnerships and innovation, these clinics will teach patients how they can best maintain or achieve good health.

In 2004, the WellPoint Foundation granted OAFc a pilot grant to determine the feasibility of wellness programming in free clinics. For those who participated, the programs were met with great enthusiasm. Because of the pilot's success, we are able to expand programming to several more clinics, with programming beginning after the holiday season.

The Northeast Ohio Universities College of Medicine (NEOUCOM) will be our research partner for this program as we determine the outcomes of wellness initiatives in each of the sites. New to this round of funding is institutional review board (human subjects) approval of the program in conjunction with the medical school.

We look forward to a healthy dose of new programming in 2009 with WellPoint, NEOUCOM and the OAFc!

Opening of New Plain City Free Clinic Satellite Office

Charles Holcombe
Clinical/Volunteer Coordinator

After almost two years of planning, the Plain City Free Clinic opened its doors on Saturday, October 18, 2008. Dr. John Adams served as physician, and the clinic was held in his office in Plain City. Eight volunteers, including three nurses, have helped at the clinic thus far. In just two weeks, 34 volunteers had already contributed.

Plain City Free Clinic is a satellite office of Madison County Health Partners, Inc., which operates in London, Ohio.

Beyond basic healthcare, the following services are also provided by community volunteers: information about community resources and services, help applying to manufacturers prescription assistance programs, referrals to appropriate community services, spiritual support (if requested), and financial vouchers to help pay for prescription drugs.



In photo (L to R): Stacy Troyer (Plain City Area Health Needs Committee), Charles Holcombe, Dr. John Adams, Kelly Gregory (Office Manager), and Pam Wirz (Medical Assistant).

UHCAN Ohio & Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage

Kathleen Gmeiner

No one has to tell Ohioans who are among the state's 1.3 million uninsured that the health care system is broken and needs to be fixed now! As good as the free clinics, community health centers, and public health departments are, their health professionals' hard work only partially fills the gap that keeps both the uninsured and the underinsured from accessing the range of services they need.

In 2007 a group of both statewide and local organizations reflecting consumers, labor, faith-based constituencies, older Americans and persons with disabilities joined together to build a united consumer voice for health care reform. Calling itself the Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage (OCHC), and led by UHCAN Ohio, this coalition adopted principles based on the 2004 Institute of Medicine's *Insuring America's Health* report.

- Health care coverage should be available to all, should be continuous, and should be affordable to individuals and families.
- Achieving health care coverage should be affordable and sustainable for society.
- Health Insurance should enhance health and well-being by promoting access to high-quality care that is effective, efficient, safe, timely, patient-centered, and equitable.

OCHC believes that when the consumer voice is loud enough and organized enough, we will see change in the health care system. OCHC also believes that we need to work together to reform the insurance market, expand public subsidies for those who need them, achieve shared financial responsibility, achieve transparency and accountability in health care spending, and set policies to deliver health care at the right time and place to improve outcomes and reduce expenditures.

Last August OCHC kicked off its "Fix It Now!" campaign. Wearing construction hats and raising construction signs, consumers gathered at the Ohio State House with one simple message, "Fix our broken health care system now!"

Since the kick-off OCHC members and staff have followed federal and state candidates all over the State of Ohio to reinforce the message and to gather signatures on petitions asking the Governor and Ohio Legislature to make fixing the health care system its highest priority in the coming legislative session.

OCHC is hosting local "community conversations" throughout the state, using a tool developed by Viewpoint Learning in cooperation with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. These conversations bring diverse constituencies together to find common ground in solving the health care crisis. The solutions developed in these conversations are recorded and will be presented to Ohio policymakers. And – good news! An on-line conversation has been launched, and people from all parts of the health care system—consumers, providers, business and government – are urged to explore common ground by dialoguing with people across Ohio about solutions to our broken health care system. To join the conversation and make your voice heard, go to www.voicesforhealthcare.org.

OCHC is developing grassroots networks in Athens, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo and welcomes the participation of both organizations and individual consumers. To learn more about OCHC and to sign the petition on-line go to www.ohioconsumersforhealth.org.

Why I Volunteer

Dr. Bill Fike, MD

Medical Director of the Lake County Free Medical Clinic

Volunteering to me is sharing a valuable commodity—myself. I have been given much through the years, and I feel that it is appropriate to give back to God's world a portion of these gifts. In addition to the warm feeling I get from helping someone without the ability to pay, I have also seen quite a few medical conditions that were new to me, thus enriching even my knowledge of medicine.

Our American free-enterprise system of health insurance has failed a large segment of the population, and it is these people we see and treat at Lake County Free Clinic. Most of us can't understand what it would be like to be disenfranchised, or cut off, from basic medical care.

American medicine has a Hippocratic obligation to treat patients regardless of their ability to pay for these services. Unless - or until - our health insurance system changes to include these members of our society, we, as care providers, should share a portion of our professional time to benefit those without health insurance.

If each provider donated just two hours of his or her time each month, we could collectively make a major difference in the medical care of our county and state.

For more information on volunteering, contact the OAF at 614-221-6494.



Ohio Association of Free Clinics

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Upcoming Events:

**Cover the Uninsured Week
March 22-28**

**OAF Legislative Day
April 22, 2009
Columbus, Ohio**



Health Literacy Tips #2

Teaching Patients Who Have Low Literacy Skills

- Regardless of their literacy level, most patients do want to know about their condition, and they do want to do what's best.
- Patient education is more likely to result in behavior change if patients are ready to hear new information and the information is provided in the right way.
- Assess the patients' readiness to hear new information by:
 - asking questions to determine if patients want to learn at the present moment, and

- asking questions to determine their motivation to learn.

- Help patients become ready to hear new information by:

- learning what patients already know, and

- preparing patients by explaining what you will cover.

- Help patients understand verbal patient education by:

- using effective teaching techniques such as establishing a supportive atmosphere, limiting the amount of information, and being clear and simple, and

- having patients "teach back."

- Reinforce verbal education with printed materials.

- Help patients use printed materials after the office visit by highlighting key points with special colors or symbols and summarizing key points verbally.

For additional information, obtain a copy of *Health Literacy in Patient Care: Helping Your Patients Understand*, an educational CD produced by the NEOUCOM Department of Family Medicine, available at <http://www.neoucom.edu/familymedicine>.