



## Celebrating our Volunteers

Our volunteers were honored for their selfless donation of time and skills during a National Volunteer Week celebration in April. Numbering more than 230, these physicians, nurses, interpreters, screeners and administrative assistants contribute 25,000 hours to care for nearly 3,000 low-income Connecticut residents each year.

“Our volunteers are the heart and soul of our program,” said AmeriCares Free Clinics Associate Director Terri McCartney, who is in charge of volunteer recruitment. “We couldn’t keep our doors open without them.”

More than two-thirds of our volunteers have medical expertise – physicians, nurses, medical assistants and nurse practitioners. Many have been volunteering since our first clinic opened in 1994.

“All have the medical knowledge as well as the compassion and understanding to make patients feel better, get well and stay healthy,” McCartney said. “But it takes more than medical skills to run a free clinic. We also need skilled interpreters and



Volunteers with 10 years of service or more, from left to right: Ann Bello, Carmen Crosby, John Pino, Nancy Anne Gavigan, Dr. Eric Einstein, Mary Jacobs, Lyette Segerdahl, Judith Breekland, Nancy Brown, Susanne Lebrija, Patricia Porio and Stella Korchinski.

other volunteers to help screen patients for eligibility.”

The volunteer screener doesn’t just collect demographic information; he

or she has to put new patients at ease, recognizing that making the decision to seek help from a free clinic is not always easy for patients.

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Danbury clinic interpreters Selma DaSilva (left) and Linda Sandiaes (right) with Norwalk volunteer Rosario Medina (center) at the volunteer recognition event at AmeriCares headquarters.

### Our Volunteers

- 70 Doctors
- 69 Nurses
- 46 Interpreters
- 18 Screeners
- 13 Medical Assistants
- 10 Nurse Practitioners
- 6 Administrative Volunteers
- 1 Nutritionist



**From the Executive Director**

Dear Friends,

There are so many ways to measure how one “makes a difference” – the most common answer volunteers give when asked why they donate time. Many are keenly aware of their actions today, but few think about the repercussions in the days, weeks and even years to come. I like to think of these as ripples – the lovely, slow-moving circles that emanate from a center and spread out further and further.

At the naming celebration of the Bob Macauley AmeriCares Free Clinic in 2011, our co-founder, Leila Macauley, spoke of a young woman who came to the Norwalk clinic in need of medical care. Cured and healthy, this young woman went on to open an orphanage for homeless children in Guatemala – creating ripples a continent away that will be felt for generations.

We will never know all the ripples created by our dedicated volunteers: The mom who got a pre-employment physical today, who was able to get a job, support her children and bring some pride and normalcy back to the family. The diabetic, who through careful treatment, is able to lead a normal life, avoiding kidney failure, vision loss and amputations. The woman who finally got her mammogram after much encouragement, and found, through early intervention, the cancer that may have progressed and threatened her life.

Everything our volunteers do has a lasting impact far into the future. On behalf of our staff and patients, thank you to our wonderful volunteers – keep making ripples!

With great appreciation,

**Karen Gottlieb, RN, MBA**

# Volunteer News

*“Working at the Danbury clinic is the highlight of my week. I have retired from teaching after 40 years and I thought I would never find anything as rewarding as teaching – I was wrong. The staff at the clinic is wonderful and they make me feel so needed and appreciated. And the patients who thank us on a daily basis are extremely rewarding.”*



Patricia Lopes, interpreter, Danbury clinic

## A warm welcome to our new volunteers

### Bridgeport

- Nana Ampada
- Samantha Austin
- Ralph Behlok, RN
- Tiffany Diaz
- Samantha Flanagan
- Regina Kulacz, RN
- Liza Leukhardt, RN
- John Machledt, MD
- Mary Marinaccio, RN
- Susi Trexler

### Norwalk

- Olga Martinez Avila
- Amy Denton
- Jonathan Greenwald, MD
- Jennifer Harvey
- Fran Kilgus, RN
- Blanca Paccha
- Stephanie Schott, RN
- Amanda Schultz, RN
- Mindy Sotsky, MD
- Katie Ulin
- Melissa Wynn, RN

### Danbury

- Bernard Cieniawa, DO
- Linda Daniel, RN
- Selma Da Silva
- Katherine Valenti

**To volunteer contact Terri McCartney at 203.658.9500 or [tmccartney@americares.org](mailto:tmccartney@americares.org)**

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Interpreters ensure non-English speaking patients accurately convey their symptoms and medical history to the provider. Sensitive to cultural differences, they also ensure patients understand the provider’s instructions before they leave, knowing many are too timid to ask for clarification of treatment protocols.



Dr. Samuel Frumkin and Carmen Crosby

Administrative volunteers help with events, pull charts, make referrals, place phone calls and anything that needs to get done. By supplementing our small staff, they allow us to devote more resources to patient care.

“No matter their skills, our volunteers all form strong bonds with patients,” McCartney said. “Patients give hugs and home-baked goods, but the best reward is seeing them get better.”

## Volunteer Physician Inspires Supporters

Volunteer doctor Katy Close and her husband, Christopher Buckley, hosted an intimate gathering at their Stamford home in May to raise awareness and critical funding for our program. A primary care physician who volunteers at our Bridgeport and Norwalk clinics, Dr. Close spoke of the satisfaction she receives from helping low-income patients struggling to take care of their families. She encouraged friends and AmeriCares supporters to get more involved with our free clinics.

Dr. Close got to know AmeriCares in 1994 through the Medical Outreach Program, which provides medicines and medical



AmeriCares President and CEO Curt Welling with Dr. Katy Close, AmeriCares Free Clinics Executive Director Karen Gottlieb and Close's husband Christopher Buckley.

supplies for her volunteer work at Hôpital Albert Schweitzer in Haiti. When Dr. Close moved to Stamford in 2010, she began volunteering in our clinics. Her work with AmeriCares came full circle recently when a familiar-looking man approached her at the hospital in Haiti. It took her a few minutes to realize how she knew him.

“It turned out he was a patient from the Bridgeport clinic,” Dr. Close said. “I picked up the phone, called Bridgeport Clinic Director Cathy Sheehan to find out what medicines he was prescribed, and filled his scripts right there on the spot.”



Attendees Dick Steinberg, Pam Kushmerik, Marilyn Clemmons, Art Selkowitz, Betsey Selkowitz and Judith Steinberg.

## YMCA Program Helps Pre-Diabetic Patients

The Wilton Family Y is offering its Diabetes Prevention Program to Norwalk clinic patients at increased risk for diabetes.

Participants aim to lose 7 percent of their body weight over the course of 12 months through diet changes and exercise. The program includes 16 weeks of health education classes plus access to the Y's workout facilities and swimming pool. After the classes end, participants meet monthly with lifestyle coaches to track their progress. AmeriCares patients pay \$16 for the year-long program instead of the usual \$160. To date, 11 of our 12 patients enrolled have successfully lost weight.

“The first group of patients lost weight during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's when it is very tempting to overindulge,” said Norwalk Clinic Director Barbara McCabe. “They showed extraordinary willpower to make it through the holidays. If patients continue to practice what they learn in the program they will be taking important steps toward preventing or delaying the onset of diabetes.”



## Our Supporters

We would like to thank the following donors for contributing \$10,000 or more to our program during the past year:

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**Boehringer Ingelheim AmeriCares  
Free Clinic of Danbury**

76 West Street  
Danbury, CT 06810  
203.748.6188

**Bob Macauley AmeriCares Free Clinic  
of Norwalk**

98 South Main Street  
Norwalk, CT 06854  
203.899.2493

## A Patient's Story: Mariline

Last March, Mariline began having severe headaches and heart palpitations that frightened her.

She was having serious side effects from an over-the-counter weight loss product, but without health insurance she did not know where to turn for help.

When she shared her concerns, a friend told her about the Weisman AmeriCares Free Clinic of Bridgeport and made her an appointment. During her first visit to the clinic, a nurse practitioner established a care regimen for the 32-year-old Bridgeport resident that included an alternative weight loss plan, a healthy body mass index goal, and Vitamin D supplements. Mariline immediately stopped taking the diet pill, drastically altered her diet and started exercising regularly, including Zumba classes.

Over the next year, the clinic staff and volunteers served as her support system while providing her with healthy eating tips and monitoring her blood pressure and weight. Thanks to their encouragement, Mariline has been able to lose over 55 pounds and is no longer at high risk for hypertension and diabetes.

“Before I came to the clinic I had bad, bad back pain and sometimes I couldn’t stand – my knees were very painful,” she said. “Now everything is ok; everything is great. I feel great in my skin.”

Mariline is so appreciative of the AmeriCares staff for empowering her to change her lifestyle. Due to the personalized, quality care she received, she now brings her mother to the clinic.

“They motivated me to continue to do what I was doing,” Mariline said. “I am very happy with the care I received.”

