



Clinics Still in Demand Despite Health Reform

Even though more than 300 of our patients have become insured, patient visits remain steady and are expected to increase by the end of the year. About 20 percent of the 1,600 patients we approached about insurance eligibility qualified for Medicaid, and though saddened to leave the compassionate and quality care of the free clinic, at least have the peace of mind that their extended medical needs are covered.

Only a handful of patients purchased private health plans through the state health exchange. When working with patients, Kathryn Kinasewitz, an administrative assistant at the Boehringer Ingelheim AmeriCares Free Clinic of Danbury, found that even the least expensive plan was cost prohibitive.

“We have patients earning less than \$20,000 a year in one of the most expensive counties in the U.S., so there is no wiggle room in their budgets for the added expense,” she said.

Clinic visits are up this year in Norwalk and Danbury, and Stamford has seen more than 250 new patients since January.

“Considering an estimated 170,000 Connecticut residents remain uninsured, this is no surprise,” said AmeriCares Free Clinics Executive Director Karen Gottlieb. “With an already stretched health care system, the addition of tens of thousands of newly insured will make care for the uninsured increasingly hard to find. For these patients, we will be there.”



Volunteers Services Associate Lorraine Larkin helps a Stamford clinic patient apply for Medicaid in March.

Stamford Mobile Clinic Now Open



From left to right: Quest Diagnostics New England Sales Project Manager Stella Smith, Stamford Hospital SVP of Strategy and Network Development David Smith, Stamford Mayor David Martin, Governor Dannel Malloy, former AmeriCares President and CEO Curt Welling and AFC Executive Director Karen Gottlieb cut the ribbon during the Jan. 9 opening.

The new AmeriCares Free Clinic of Stamford launched amid fanfare in January with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at AmeriCares headquarters. The clinic is open three days a week, making scheduled stops at Neighbors Link on Selleck Street, New Covenant House of Hospitality soup kitchen on Fairfield Avenue and Domus on Lockwood Avenue.

The clinic offers the same services as our other three locations including primary care and pre-employment physicals. More than 30 volunteers are supporting the program, which provided nearly 600 patient visits in the first five months of operation.

Patients come seeking treatment for hypertension, diabetes and gastrointestinal problems as well as for

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New Medical Directors Named



From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

As we begin our 20th year, I look back with pride at the amazing program we have nurtured and grown. In 1992, AmeriCares founder Bob Macauley, after learning that 9 percent of Connecticut's population was uninsured, issued the mandate, "Let's open a free clinic — make it happen!"

Charged with having the first year's budget in the bank before the doors opened and challenged by skeptics who said "doctors will never volunteer," we opened our first clinic in Norwalk in 1994. Essential to our model were volunteers, donated diagnostic and lab testing, rent-free space and donor dollars — \$150,000 of them! Working with the Fairfield County Medical Association and our medical director, Dr. Jack Falsone, we were able to recruit a dozen doctors. Norwalk Hospital came on board with donated radiology services, and with the support of Carol Bauer, chairman of the hospital board at that time, we secured most everything we needed. A volunteer connected us with Quest Diagnostics, which donated a full range of lab testing.

It seemed too easy — rent-free space practically fell into our lap, key donors pledged funds and services — and a clinic was born. The program we built is now the primary source of care for more than 3,000 Fairfield County residents.

With great appreciation,

Karen Gottlieb, RN, MBA

Longtime Norwalk clinic volunteer Alfred Wolfsohn, MD, and new Stamford clinic volunteer Robert Shapiro, MD, have been named co-medical directors of the new AmeriCares Free Clinic of Stamford. Dr. Wolfsohn has been volunteering since 1999; Dr. Shapiro joined with the opening of the Stamford clinic. Medical directors serve as advocates in the local community, provide guidance on clinic policies and procedures and assist with the recruitment of volunteer physicians.

Dr. Wolfsohn said he gets satisfaction knowing the treatment he provides will help a sick patient get well, return to work and provide for his family.



Dr. Robert Shapiro (left) and Dr. Alfred Wolfsohn (right) on board the mobile clinic.

"Many of our patients don't have paid sick time, so if they can't work due to illness or injury it is tragic," Dr. Wolfsohn said. "I am glad I can help get them back on their feet."

Dr. Shapiro said the rewards were evident from day one.

"A man came up to me on my first day volunteering and shook my hand and said, 'This is a very good thing you are doing,' " Dr. Shapiro said. "It gave me goose bumps."

Volunteer News

"Volunteering at AmeriCares means giving back what I once received when I was uninsured. Volunteering means receiving more than giving."



Zoila Zamora-Fuentes, Interpreter, Stamford clinic

A warm welcome to our new volunteers

Bridgeport

Felicia Amoah, RN
Angela Casillas, RN
Myles Greenberg, MD
Ginger Kirk
Clare McGrath, RN
Ambar Picon
Mimi Puebla
Marilyn Purvis, RN
Matthew Rigoli
Jamie Turner, RN

Norwalk

Josephina Bell, RN
Laura Berger, RN
Leslie Cenci, NP
Devon Costello
Lorena Martinez
Tamara Olicoeur
Daisy Pavon
Ellen Ryan, RN
Enriqueta Stavert
Luz Vazquez
Jeff Wells, RN

Stamford

Katherine Alban
Cathy Carpenter, RN
Miolmida Casseus, RN
Anaira Clavo
Bridget Dowd, RN
Karen Falkenstein, RN
Alicia Gallo
Donna Getreuer, RN
Jennifer Gonzalez, RN
Josh Hajjar, RN
Paula Iacobazzo, RN
Marge Kappas, RN

Andrea Lopez, RN

John McIntire
Craig Olin, MD
Will Rosario
Evelyn Rowley
Robert Shapiro, MD
Maria Solis
Sandi Wasch, RN
Zoila Zamora-Fuentes

Danbury

Marisela Cruz
Lissette Rivas, RN
Nicole Simonelli

To volunteer contact

Terri McCartney at 203.658.9500 or tmccartney@americares.org

Stamford Clinic Now Open continued from page 1

the aches and pains that are common among the working poor with physical jobs requiring heavy lifting. Others feel fine but want a medical professional to confirm there are no health problems to cause concern.

“Some patients haven’t seen a physician in more than decade,” said Stamford Clinic Director Muguette Maignan. “We begin treatment immediately if indicated, but sometimes they just need that peace of mind that everything is OK because medical care has been out of reach for so long.”



Dr. Marcelyn Molloy examines a patient on board the mobile clinic in January.

The mobile unit is the first free clinic in the city where nearly one out of every five residents is uninsured and the local hospital has one of the highest rates of uncompensated care in the state.

It is expected to provide 1,200 patient visits and about \$900,000 in free health care services in its first year.



Introducing Muguette Maignan

Muguette Maignan, RN, has been named Stamford clinic director overseeing the day-to-day operations of the new mobile clinic program. Maignan, a longtime Stamford resident, previously worked for Stamford Hospital and Optimus Health Care. She is fluent in Spanish and graduated magna cum laude from the University of Massachusetts Boston with a bachelor’s degree in nursing.

Volunteers Honored at Reception



We celebrated our clinic volunteers during a National Volunteer Week reception at AmeriCares headquarters in April. We could not operate without our 260 volunteers — physicians, nurses, interpreters, eligibility screeners and administrative help who donate their time and talents to help our neighbors in need. From left to right: Norwalk clinic volunteers Pat Podkowsky, Fiorella Velasquez, Ann Bello and Caryl Komornik.



A Message from AmeriCares President and CEO

Dear Friends,

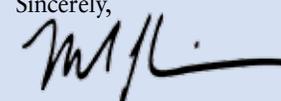
As AmeriCares new president and CEO, I made it one of my top priorities to visit all four clinics within the first 90 days. At each one I found a community of caring that is helping our uninsured neighbors avert crisis. I saw patients getting pre-employment physicals that will help them seek better jobs and diabetics receiving medications that will keep them out of the ER.

I was equally impressed by the warm manner in which every patient is treated, and the strength of the partnerships with the local medical community that ensure patients receive comprehensive outpatient care.

The AmeriCares Free Clinics play a vital role in the local health care safety net — keeping patients well and able to provide for their families. Our 20 years of success is a model for other free clinics across the country. It also provides insight that guides AmeriCares aid deliveries to hundreds of other free and charitable clinics in the U.S.

I came to AmeriCares with two decades of experience working in impoverished countries, but it is especially gratifying to help thousands of struggling families here in Fairfield County. Our clinic staff and volunteers are creating lasting change in our communities, one patient at a time.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Nyenhuis



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88 Hamilton Avenue
Stamford, CT 06902
203.658.9500
americaresfreeclinics.org

Weisman AmeriCares Free Clinic

115 Highland Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203.333.9175

Boehringer Ingelheim AmeriCares Free Clinic

76 West Street
Danbury, CT 06810
203.748.6188

Bob Macauley AmeriCares Free Clinic

98 South Main Street
Norwalk, CT 06854
203.899.2493

AmeriCares Free Clinic of Stamford

Mobile Clinic
203.658.9507

A Patient's Story: Oscar

When Oscar began feeling a burning sensation and pain in his upper abdomen he went right away to the Bob Macauley AmeriCares Free Clinic of Norwalk, where he has been receiving care since 1997. He was successfully treated for a stomach bacteria and given medications to help his reflux, but the symptoms persisted.

Swallowing became so difficult at one point that he had to stand up and drink large quantities of water in order to make food go down. Eating had become so painful that he lost 25 pounds.

An upper GI series provided by our partner Norwalk Hospital suggested that Oscar may be suffering from Achalasia — a rare disease of the esophagus affecting approximately one in 100,000 people. He was referred to longtime clinic volunteer Dr. William Hale, a gastroenterologist who performed an endoscopy and confirmed the diagnosis. Achalasia, which means “failure to relax,” refers to the inability of the lower esophageal sphincter to open and let food pass into the stomach — explaining why eating had become so miserable.

Dr. Hale referred Oscar to a surgeon at Yale-New Haven Hospital who was able to relieve his symptoms with a laparoscopic procedure. Oscar is now symptom-free and he is extremely grateful to be able to eat normally again. He has even gained back the weight he lost.

The 34-year-old carpenter is just one of the thousands of patients who have received extraordinary care through the four AmeriCares Free Clinics in Connecticut and our partners. Norwalk Hospital provided free diagnostic testing, our volunteer specialist performed the endoscopy free of charge, and our staff managing Oscar's care was tenacious in obtaining all the treatment he needed to make a speedy recovery.

