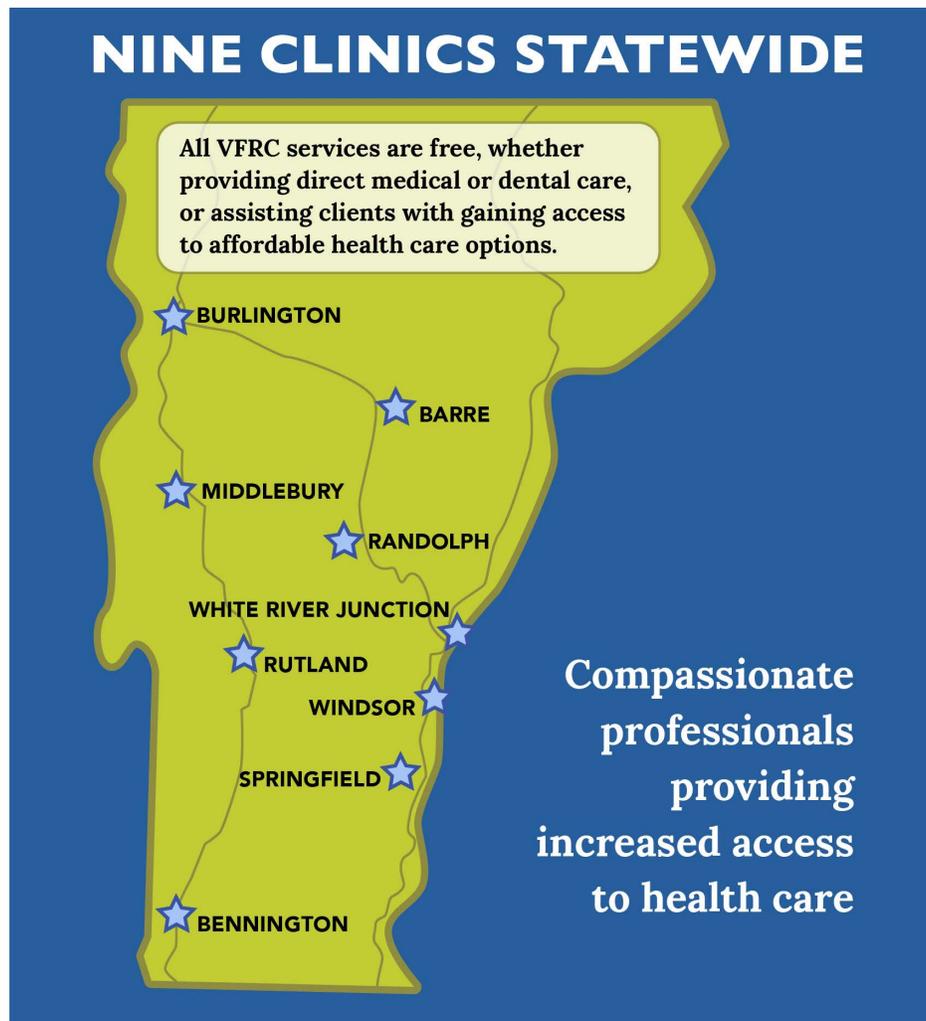




Formerly the Vermont Coalition of Clinics for the Uninsured (VCCU)

802-448-4280 director@vtfreeclinics.org www.vtfreeclinics.org
Steve Maier, Executive Director | February 7, 2020

Stories of Our Clinics: Celebrating 25 Years of Service to Vermont



- Bennington Free Clinic, *Bennington*
- Good Neighbor Health Clinic & Red Logan Dental Clinic, *White River Junction*
- The Health Assistance Program at the UVM Medical Center, *Burlington*
- Health Connections at Gifford, *Randolph*
- Open Door Clinic, *Middlebury*
- People's Health & Wellness Clinic, *Barre*
- Rutland County Free Clinic & Dental Clinic, *Rutland*
- Valley Health Connections, *Springfield*
- Windsor Community Health Clinic at Mt. Ascutney Hospital, *Windsor*



Commemorating 25 Years of Increasing Access to Care for Uninsured and Underinsured People in Vermont

Dear Friends –

As it marks its 25th year of service to the people of Vermont, the organization historically known as the Vermont Coalition of Clinics for the Uninsured (VCCU) has adopted a new name that better reflects the full sweep of its services to people in need.

We're pleased to introduce you to the newly named Vermont's Free & Referral Clinics (VFRC).

Now a quarter of a century old, VFRC is a (501)(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is "to support member free clinics in Vermont that identify gaps and provide access to care, via on-site or by referral services, to uninsured and underinsured people."

The roots of VFRC can be found in the early 1990s, when free health and dental clinics sprouted in multiple locations throughout the Green Mountain State – from Rutland to White River Junction and Middlebury to Barre to Burlington. In 1995, five clinics – encouraged by funding from the Vermont Community Foundation and the Haymarket Fund – came together as the Vermont Coalition of Clinics for the Uninsured. Their purpose: to facilitate free clinic collaboration and planning statewide. Their first step: sharing common data collection software among the member clinics, facilitating better collection of information on patient demographics and free clinic services throughout Vermont.

Incorporated as a non-profit organization, the fledgling coalition of Vermont free clinics named a part-time coordinator and evolved into a critical collaborator in the delivery of healthcare services to underserved people in Vermont. In 1999, Vermont legislators awarded \$300,000 to VFRC (then VCCU) to support case management in the free clinic network – the first of 20 consecutive years of vital state funding for the essential work of our member clinics. Federal Medicaid matching funds have also been used over the past decade. The total support for VFRC's work grew to \$640,000 annually in 2006 and reached \$1,028,000 in funding for fiscal years 2019 and 2020.

We're deeply appreciative of our legislators, regulators, and healthcare administrators who continue to show support for the critical services VFRC's member clinics provide to uninsured and underinsured people. Support from the state – as well as from grant makers, donors, and many hundreds of volunteers – enables our clinics to serve an ever-increasing number of Vermonters. In 2019, we assisted 8,447 people, which represented a 7% increase over the previous year and a 46% increase since 2010. In 2019, our clinics provided 5,763 medical and dental visits and 20,000 patient visits for other services, including referrals, access to free medication, and assistance enrolling in Medicaid or other health insurance.

The following stories from our nine member clinics shed a deeply human light on the diverse services we provide, putting the faces of our friends and neighbors to the hard data shared above. We are grateful for the ongoing support of our many partners and we look forward to continuing to share the compelling stories of VFRC's successes in the years ahead.

Warmest regards,

Heidi Sulis, MPH
Chair, VFRC Board of Directors

Steve Maier
VFRC Executive Director

Open Door Clinic
Middlebury and Vergennes, Vermont

A Powerful Story about Healthcare Access from an Addison County Neighbor

(NOTE: The following is a compelling letter written by Stephanie, a patient and volunteer with Open Door Clinic. It illuminates the critical role that Open Door plays in providing Vermonters – regardless of their lack of insurance, inadequate healthcare coverage, or citizenship status – with access to life-changing, life-saving health care. Stephanie agreed to have the letter shared with her neighbors as part of Open Door’s annual fundraising appeal this past year.)*

Dear Friends,

I am an uninsured Vermonter, having fallen through the cracks of a patchwork healthcare system. In fall 2017, I was offered full-time employment at a company that provides a healthcare stipend, making me ineligible for subsidies through the marketplace. However, the stipend is too little to make even the cheapest premiums and copays affordable. Although I have preexisting conditions that require physical therapy and prescriptions to manage, I made the choice in December 2017 to give up my Medicaid coverage and pursue full-time employment. I love my job and am proud of the work that I do. Losing access to health care was the only major downside to taking this position.



By October 2018, I was cutting pills in half and preparing to wean myself from my prescription medication. The last endocrinologist I saw in December 2017 gave me a list of warning signs that would indicate my condition was worsening. The only major concern I had was rapid weight gain (10 pounds over the course of a month) without changes to my diet. That was one of the warning signs, but I planned to see what would happen once I completely stopped taking my medication before going to a doctor. I posted on an online forum asking for advice, hoping to hear from a physician, but got no response. Horror stories about the astronomical costs of health care for the uninsured kept me from calling previous doctors, and I just unbuttoned my jeans.

One Sunday that October, I was attending a church service and heard a talk about ways Vermonters can help migrant farmworkers in our community. I'd been looking for a more concrete way to help both locally and nationally marginalized groups. I gave the speaker my phone number and found myself at the Open Door Clinic in Vergennes ten days later, preparing to pick up three farmworkers from a group therapy meeting. Having never studied Spanish, I practiced saying "Hola, ¿cómo estás?" and "No comprendo" a few times on the way to the clinic.

Before giving the ride that night, I didn't even know the clinic existed in Addison County. A couple of people had told me about a "free doctor" near Porter Hospital that I could go to if I fell ill, but I hadn't felt right about using those resources and never looked into it further. I didn't realize the satellite clinic in Vergennes was the same "free doctor" – I thought it was a meeting space specifically for migrant farmworkers.

When I walked in, I met one of the nurses at the clinic. The space looked more like a doctor's office, so on a whim, I asked her if she knew about any resources for uninsured American citizens looking for health care. She asked me a few questions about my medical history and then told me that Open Door was a free health clinic meant for everyone; citizenship was irrelevant. I was shocked when she told me that receiving care at the clinic was free,

and even more shocked when she offered to have a doctor see me to refill my prescription while I waited for the workers' meeting to end.

I filled out the paperwork and, within half an hour, was talking to an actual doctor. I walked out that night with a year's prescription for the medication I had been prescribed in 2017, plus an additional medication that the doctor thought might help with the weight gain. I paid nothing for the office visit - I only had to cover the cost of the prescriptions. The nurse gave me information about several pharmacies and a voucher that would help lower the cost of the medicine. I felt like I hit the jackpot.

I *did* hit the jackpot.

It's been just under eight months since that first evening. I've been to the clinic again for a physical required by my job (one of the most in-depth physicals I've ever had), and even received a vaccine that was overdue. I've had blood work taken to confirm that my preexisting condition is not worsening. I have an appointment for gynecological services in the fall. I never thought I would have access to this type of care - it was part of the tradeoff of taking my job.

I've taken many of our farmworker neighbors to clinic appointments - both in Middlebury and Vergennes - and to dentists, optometrists, and other specialists in the area on referrals from Open Door. I've watched them experience the same relief I felt from having access to health care. I've been learning Spanish and hope to eventually be skilled enough to serve as an interpreter at the clinic. Right now, I can't give back financially, and I feel a deep need to serve this place that helps so many.

I want you to know that this community, our community, has created a resource that has changed my life. Everything from my sleep quality to my ability to have children is affected by the medication I am taking daily because of Open Door. Your donations - and the incredible gift of time given by the volunteer staff, medical and clerical, at the clinic - have a direct and measurable impact on your neighbors.

When I'm healthier, I can do my job better, and I can be a better member of our community. I'm healthier because of Open Door Clinic. I am deeply grateful.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Stephanie

Your Neighbor Stephanie

* The patient's name has been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

Bennington Free Clinic

Bennington, Vermont

Providing Care, Comfort, and Compassion in a Time of Profound Crisis

Diane* is a 40-year-old woman who underwent a lumpectomy in late 2018, when she had health insurance. Her oncologist urged her to have a follow-up mammogram monthly for the next six months, but she was unable to do so because her insurance had a \$7,000 deductible and she simply could not afford the subsequent screenings.

Late last year – and with the assistance of Cindy Krauthem, Women’s Health Champion with the Bennington Free Clinic – Diane enrolled in You First, the statewide program of the Vermont Department of Health that offers personalized support to pay for and connect Vermonters to breast, cervical, and heart screenings. Diane was thus able to have her first mammogram in more than a year. Unfortunately, the result was not good: she was diagnosed with an aggressive breast cancer with genetic implications.

With additional support from the Bennington Free Clinic, Diane’s insurance coverage has now been transferred to a special Medicaid cancer care program. As of this writing, she is awaiting imminent double mastectomy surgery. Meanwhile, she has been living hand-to-mouth since getting divorced a few months ago. She works full-time at \$14 an hour and barely makes ends meet. She will be out of work for a minimum of one month following the surgery, and she’s very concerned that she may lose her mobile home and car as a result. Needless to say, the stress and turmoil in Diane’s life are nearly insurmountable.

Thankfully, the Bennington Free Clinic and its umbrella organization, Greater Bennington Interfaith Community Services (GBICS), are there to help.

“Cindy and I have met with Diane and brainstormed a number of community resources that are available to her now or will be available to her once she has the surgery,” noted GBICS Executive Director Sue Andrews. “No one should have to deal with the kind of stress she is enduring while facing life-threatening cancer. She will be treated locally and GBICS will continue to reach out and help with health care and financial assistance as we are able.”

GBICS’s menu of programs serving the greater Bennington community includes not only the Bennington Free Clinic, but also the Interfaith Food and Fuel Fund, the Kitchen Cupboard, and the Bennington Oral Health Coalition. The organization is thus uniquely positioned to assist local residents such as Diane with a wealth of essential, interconnected services in times of critical need.



* The patient name has been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

Valley Health Connections *Springfield, Vermont*

Connecting Vermonters with Health Care Across the Economic Spectrum

Loretta*, a 76-year-old Vermonter on Medicare, was stressed and struggling with major health and financial issues. Mandy*, an uninsured woman facing surgery and a regimen of expensive medications after the holidays, missed the year-end, open enrollment deadline to sign up for insurance through Vermont Health Connect.

Together, their stories exemplify the outreach and referral work of Valley Health Connections in Springfield, Vermont: work that saves lives and protects patients from serious financial hardship.



Loretta's Story: Providing a Pathway to Health and Financial Security

Facing a number of significant health issues, Loretta reached the reluctant decision to step down from her job as a care provider when her client found a long-term placement last fall. At 76, Loretta's health was deteriorating and she'd recently spent a significant amount of time in the hospital. She was deeply concerned about the impact of her declining health on her physical, mental, and financial well-being. That's when she reached out to Valley Health Connections for assistance, although uncertain if the free referral clinic could do anything to help her.

"After a five-minute intake interview over the telephone, it was clear that there were a number of programs available to help Loretta," explained Lynn Raymond-Empey, the executive director of Valley Health Connections. "We got the process started by having Loretta gather her income verification and insurance information, including a detailed list of her medications. And then she came in for a face-to-face appointment, where our work with her really began in earnest."

Valley Health Connections assisted Loretta in applying for a low-income subsidy to cover the cost of her Medicare Part D plan and reduce her copays for prescription drugs. The Springfield-based referral clinic also helped Loretta apply for the Medicare Savings program, which covers the cost of her Medicare Part B plan and can also help with coinsurance. In order for Loretta to qualify for these programs, Valley Health Connections had to help her over another frustrating barrier: she had to apply for unemployment insurance, even though she was physically unable to work anymore. "While we questioned the state about the senselessness of this requirement, we nonetheless completed the unemployment paperwork the very first day," Raymond-Empey said.

All these efforts resulted in a significant decrease in Loretta's out-of-pocket expenses for health care, as well as a marked reduction in her stress level, which itself was having a negative impact on her well-being. On a limited income of just \$1,000 a month, Loretta was paying \$135 a month for her Part B plan, \$70 for a Part D plan, and \$235 monthly for supplemental coverage she purchased when she first went on Medicare. With the assistance of Valley Health Connections, Loretta's healthcare costs dropped by more than \$200 a month – the equivalent of getting a 20% raise in her Social Security income.

"I just met with Loretta for a follow-up visit today," Lynn Raymond-Empey said recently. "You could literally see the tension come out of her neck and shoulders. Some days are very good days at the clinic."

Mandy's Story: Following the Winding Road to Health Insurance

The open enrollment period for health insurance comes only once a year. It's not only imperative to be a thoroughly trained assister in order to aid in enrollments through Vermont Health Connect: clinic staff must also have broad knowledge regarding other insurance options, including the process for direct enrollments through insurance carriers.

While it was widely advertised in 2019 that the Vermont Health Connect open enrollment period ran from November 1 through December 15, Valley Health Connections learned through its work with the state's two insurance carriers that one of those insurers, MVP, was keeping its direct enrollment period for Vermonters without healthcare subsidies open until December 26. This proved to be a godsend for Mandy, who missed the opportunity to sign up for health insurance via Vermont Health Connect by the December 15 deadline. In any event, her income put her significantly out of range for subsidies.

When she contacted Valley Health Connections just before Christmas, Mandy was in panic mode: she faced surgery and a significant regimen of expensive medications after the first of the year, all without health insurance coverage in place. Valley Health Connections immediately asked Mandy to come into the clinic to review her direct-enrollment plan options and prices.

It was December 26 – Mandy’s very last opportunity to make an insurance decision for 2020. Valley Health Connections promptly provided Mandy with an application and instructions for completing direct enrollment through MVP. Not only was she able to enroll in a plan effective January 1 – Mandy also saved on monthly premium costs while opting for a plan that worked well with her upcoming specialist visits and impending surgery.

The extended direct-enrollment period for MVP was not well publicized, nor was that information provided through Vermont Health Connect. Without the expertise and assistance of Valley Health Connections, Mandy would have remained uninsured for another year.

“Our work and knowledge of all aspects of the system is imperative for the financial stability of our healthcare institutions and, more importantly, for the health of all Vermonters,” Vermont Health Connections Executive Director Lynn Raymond-Empey concluded. “It’s not just about being a low-income person or someone with no insurance. It’s about healthcare access for everyone.”

*Patient names have been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

People’s Health and Wellness Clinic

Barre, Vermont

Connecting Central Vermonter Sophia to Essential Community Resources

The mission of the People’s Health and Wellness Clinic (PHWC) is to provide primary health care and wellness education to the uninsured and underinsured community members of central Vermont who cannot otherwise afford or access these services. The story of Sophia* and her daughter Maria* exemplifies the comprehensive and thoughtful case management offered at PHWC.

Sophia is an 86-year-old woman from the Philippines who has been a patient at PHWC in Barre for many years. Sophia’s daughter Maria recently reached out to the clinic and asked for additional help in caring for her mother because she has developed dementia.

“Because Sophia is an undocumented citizen, she cannot receive benefits,” notes PHWC Executive Director Rebecca Goldfinger-Fein. “Our goal is to document her disability and connect her with immigration resources so that Sophia can receive Medicaid benefits and therefore be eligible for other community assistance.”

PHWC continues to manage Sophia’s regular health care and, working with volunteer specialists at the clinic, has also begun to evaluate the elderly Filipina woman’s encroaching dementia. Simultaneously, the clinic’s nurse case manager has connected Maria with immigration law specialists at Vermont Law School’s South Royalton Legal Clinic, where work is now under way to assist Sophia with the process of becoming an American citizen.

The PHWC care team’s work with Sophia and Maria sheds a bright light on a key humanitarian objective of the clinic: ensuring a broad range of consistent, dependable health care and preventive health education for *all* central Vermonters.



**PEOPLE’S HEALTH
& WELLNESS CLINIC**

*Patient names have been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

Rutland County Free Clinic & Dental Clinic

Rutland, Vermont

Community-wide Collaboration is Key to Patient Wellness



**RUTLAND COUNTY
FREE CLINIC**
A path to good health.

Collaboration with multiple community and human service organizations is essential to the success of free clinics in providing improved access to quality health care for all Vermonters. The work of the Rutland Free Clinic exemplifies the importance of interconnectedness in delivering health care to those in need.

To cite but one example, the Rutland Free Clinic partnered this past year with the Vermont Farmer's Food Center Farmacy Program and other community service groups to bring fresh produce, as well as health and nutrition education programs, to uninsured and underinsured residents of rural Rutland County. The program, known as Teeth & Tomatoes, generated many positive outcomes and widespread appreciation from participants. It brought nearly 20 new patients into the Rutland Free Clinic's care, and also strengthened relationships among the many small, community-based organizations serving rural parts of the region.

Sarah*, a new Rutland Free Clinic patient from Chittenden, and her two adult children had been delaying proper health care due to a lack of insurance and ready access to providers. Since connecting with the Rutland-based clinic through the Farmacy Program outreach effort, Sarah and her daughter Marcie* have received much needed medical and dental services, plus both are now enrolled with the Vermont Department of Health's You First program, which offers personalized support to pay for and connect Vermonters to breast, cervical, and heart screenings.

Remembering Tony Morgan



Rutland native Anthony "Tony" Morgan was an exemplary Vermonter and public servant. He dedicated his life to the service of the people of Rutland County and of the entire state of Vermont, most recently as executive director of the Rutland Free Clinic. It is with great sadness and profound respect that we mourn Tony's passing on December 24, 2019, at the age of 70.

Tony was born on December 17, 1949, in Rutland, the son of Wallace and Teresa (Kenney) Morgan. He graduated from Otter Valley Union High School and Castleton State College with a degree in History. Tony married Christine Crawford in 2005 in Hawaii.

The quintessential community servant, Tony was employed by the State of Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity in Waterbury for 25 years, retiring as the director. He was a member of the Sons of the American Legion in West Rutland, serving as the National Chaplain in 2005. Tony established the West Rutland Food Shelf and served as the executive director of the Rutland Free Clinic at the time of his passing. He enjoyed gardening, golfing, and being an advocate for veterans' needs.

Tony's survivors include his wife Christine and five stepchildren – Francis, Damian, Sheena, Shelby, and Reilly. Memorial contributions in Tony's name may be made to the Rutland Free Clinic, 145 State Street, Rutland, VT 05701.

*Patient names have been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

Health Connections at Gifford

Randolph, Vermont

A Vital Healthcare Connection for People in the Heart of Vermont

Health Connections Specialist Michele Packard works in Patient Financial Services at Gifford Medical Center. During a recent interview she's initially hesitant to talk about her role – but brightens as she shares the story behind the eclectic mix of artwork that adorns her office. She points out a colorful tapestry, a painting, and a floral sculpture made of tiny seashells – all handmade thank-you gifts from Gifford patients she has worked with over the years.

“I help people access care and health insurance, and assist them in paying their bills if they get them,” said Packard, who began at Gifford as a candy striper in the 1970s, continued to volunteer in the '80s, and became staff in the '90s. “If someone is in distress, they can come to me and I help them find the path and negotiate it. I advocate for them. That's it.”

While Packard may downplay her role, providers and colleagues like Certified Diabetes Educator Jennifer Stratton, RD, consider her a vital resource as they work together to ensure continuity of care for Gifford patients.

“She is my speed dial, and I talk to her just about every day,” said Stratton. “Today is a prime example. I have a patient coming in who is unable to afford his medications.”

Stratton's patient, 77-year-old Bob*, was recently discharged from the hospital and started on insulin. Though he has Medicare Part D, Bob has “major concerns” he will not be able to afford the lifesaving diabetes drug. The cost of insulin has skyrocketed in the United States in the last decade.

Packard subsequently met with Bob and is helping him apply for VPharm, the state prescription program for Vermonters age 65 and older and for those of all ages who have a disability. VPharm helps participants pay their monthly Part D premium and significantly lowers many prescription drug copays.

“Michele and I tag team to determine what we can do,” Stratton said. “She is a huge resource for me any time I have an insurance question.”

Another of Packard's clients is 31-year-old Tammy*. She first met with Packard in 2015 as she was about to age out of her parents' health insurance policy and needed to line up coverage. Packard helped Tammy navigate Vermont Health Connect to find the right plan for her – and has continued to advocate for her through life events, including marriage, two pregnancies, and changing healthcare needs.

“I haven't been able to deal with Vermont Health Connect,” said Tammy, referring to challenges she has faced trying to navigate the system on her own. “Michele made that all happen for us for sure.”

Packard also advocated for Tammy and her husband after they incurred significant medical debt, working to have it forgiven after the couple had “paid on it for a long time,” shared the mother of two. And Tammy recently sought Packard's help again to resolve a payment dispute with MVP Health Care.

“MVP told me I wasn't paying my bills,” said Tammy. “They were dropping me because they said I wasn't paying, but I was. Vermont Health Connect was cashing my checks. Michele sent them copies of the checks.”

In addition to helping patients navigate insurance and healthcare costs, Packard helps them connect the dots as they manage their care needs.

“She’s been amazing,” said Stratton. “When people come into her office, if she sees that they don’t have a full understanding of their diabetes, for example, she’ll loop me in. She really looks at a patient as a whole person – and what really needs to happen for them to have good care.”

For her part, Packard said, “It’s all about access to health care. How do you make it accessible and affordable for people who don’t have insurance? I go home at night and feel like I’ve helped somebody.”



*Patient names have been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

Good Neighbor Health Clinic & Red Logan Dental Clinic *White River Junction, Vermont* **A Free Dental Exam Proves Life-Altering**



David* was referred to the Red Logan Dental Clinic in White River Junction because he was in pain. His first dental appointment in 15 years was a comprehensive oral exam by a dental extern from the Boston University School of Dental Medicine. The extern was supervised by Dr. Keith Rogerson, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon and one of the Red Logan Clinic’s volunteer mentors.

Using a recently installed, state-of-the-art Panorex x-ray – a contribution of the Gladys Brooks Foundation – the extern, working with Dr. Rogerson, identified a lesion that looked suspicious. The patient returned to the clinic for a biopsy and the tissue was sent by courier to Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. DHMC provides free lab work as part of the hospital’s support of the Red Logan Dental Clinic and its patients.

The biopsy was positive for ameloblastoma – a rare kind of tumor that starts in the jaw, often near the wisdom teeth or molars. It’s made from cells that form the enamel that protects the teeth. Following two surgeries at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, David was left with a small indentation in his jawbone and the loss of just one tooth. Further treatment is not required, and David’s prognosis is good.

David has returned to the Red Logan Clinic for ongoing dental care. Since initially being treated at the clinic, he has lost 21 pounds, reduced his use of insulin by 75 percent, and is committed to taking care of himself.

Above all else, the students, staff, and volunteers of the Red Logan Dental Clinic – together with their colleagues at the Good Neighbor Health Clinic – care deeply about patients. “Our vision is to help create a community where people have access to the healthcare resources they need to reach their potential for mental, physical, and social well-being. Real change happens when expert care, so freely provided, is embraced by patients,” says Dana Michalovic, the executive director of the clinics.

David’s story is but one example of that real change.

*The patient’s name has been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.



Windsor Community Health Clinic at Mt. Ascutney Hospital
Windsor, Vermont

Connecting a Young, Working Vermonter with Medications and Health Insurance

Member clinics of Vermont’s Free and Referral Clinics (VFRC) help Vermonters of all ages and income levels access high-quality care, no matter whether they are uninsured, underinsured, or simply having difficulties wending their way through the intricacies of the healthcare system.

John*, a 22-year-old man with a full-time job, showed up at the Mt. Ascutney Hospital Emergency Room one day last April, seeking immediate medical assistance. His employer did not provide health insurance as a benefit and, as a consequence, John was uninsured. Nonetheless, he needed medical attention – and, more immediately and importantly, medications he could not afford. Without being able to purchase those medications, John would have to be admitted to the hospital as an inpatient in order to receive the necessary care.

That’s when Samantha Ball – the coordinator of the Windsor Community Health Clinic (WCHC) – stepped into the situation at the request of a Mt. Ascutney Emergency Room nurse.

“I went down to the ER and met with the patient to screen him and determined that he was outside of the financial limit for Medicaid,” explained Samantha. “And because this was April, he was also outside of the open enrollment period for obtaining insurance through the health exchange.” This is a common predicament that is encountered regularly as free clinic leaders seek to provide timely referral and counseling services to patients in need.

“WCHC was able to purchase the medications John needed through a grant, and we also set him up with free medications through a pharmaceutical company,” Samantha added. “In addition, we scheduled John for an appointment during the open enrollment period in November so that we could review insurance options with him.”

Back on the road to wellness, John made it to that November appointment with WCHC. He enrolled in an MVP healthcare plan for 2020 and can now afford the medications he needs to continue his care.



*The patient’s name has been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.

The Health Assistance Program at UVM Medical Center
Burlington, Vermont

Helping a New Vermonter and Her Child in a Time of Family Crisis

Jessica* recently came to Vermont with her child to escape domestic violence in a different state. Their first essential need was for housing, and they worked with the Burlington-based Steps to End Domestic Violence human services organization to find temporary housing.

But gaining access to health care in Vermont was a different matter. That’s where the Health Assistance Program (HAP) at the University of Vermont Medical Center stepped in. HAP – one of the nine member clinics of

Vermont’s Free and Referral Clinics (VFRC) – offers benefits screening, financial assistance for medications, and other services to ensure equitable access to quality health care for everyone.

Because Jessica and her child had Medicaid coverage in their former state of residence, they had to get a letter from that state to obtain coverage in Vermont. In the meantime, the pair had an urgent need for medication, and their advocates at HAP were able to help cover the full cost of that medication through the UVM Medical Center’s Affordable Medications program.

Then HAP case manager, Jason Fine, took the next step on Jessica’s behalf.

“I made a conference call to Vermont Health Connect/Green Mountain Care and spoke to a Health Access Eligibility Unit (HAEU) representative. Presented with a reasonable explanation of Jessica’s situation, the HAEU staff member was able to activate Vermont Medicaid coverage for the family within 24 hours,” Fine said.

Jessica was deeply grateful for the immediate support HAP was able to provide. “With just a one-hour phone call,” she told Jason Fine, “HAP was able to do more for my child and I than other services have been able to accomplish in a much longer period of time.”



*The patient’s name has been changed to respect privacy, protect identity, and assure confidentiality.



Who Provided Free Clinic Services in 2019?	
Many Volunteers	
83 MDs (Medical)	6 Dental Hygienists/Assistants
5 MDs (Psychiatry)	14 Mental Health Professionals
31 DMDs (Dentistry)	71 Medical/Dental Students
71 RNs	59 Medical Interpreters
40 Mid-Levels (NP, MA, EMT, etc.)	552 Other Volunteers
Organized and assisted by 30 paid staff	