

The Community Health
Centers Newsletter

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INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS? PLEASE SEND AN E-MAIL TO CEO@CHCB.ORG. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR MISSION AND SERVICES, PLEASE VISIT WWW.CHCB.ORG.

2024 CHC Staff Celebration



The Community Health Centers of Burlington is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and Federally Qualified Health Center funded in part through a grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and generous community support. CHCB is a Health Center Program grantee under 42 U.S.C. 254b, and a deemed Public Health Service employee under 42 U.S.C. 233(g)-(n).

All CHC programs and services are accessible to people with disabilities. This newsletter is available in alternative formats upon request.

Notice of Privacy: The Community Health Centers of Burlington protect the health information of our patients and gift information of our donors in all of our activities including our fundraising work. If you no longer wish to receive newsletters, fundraising appeals, or event invitations from us, please contact the CR&D Department at 617 Riverside Avenue, Burlington, VT 05401, marketing@chcb.org, or call (802) 264-8193.

OVER 53 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING THE
QUALITY OF LIFE AND HEALTH IN OUR COMMUNITY.

Boosting Mind, Body, and Spirit



■ Deb Alsofrom and Peg Clement have been friends for more than 13 years. They met swimming and have traveled the world together, cycling and hiking. They happily celebrated each other's retirement – Deb from a career in nursing at the Community Health Centers (CHC), and Peg as an international aid worker. But when Covid-19 shut the world down in 2020, Deb knew she wanted to return to CHC to help however she could, and that meant testing and providing vaccinations to individuals experiencing homelessness. Peg wanted to join as well, with her admin/logistics and cross-cultural skills. It has now been three years that Deb and Peg have worked side-by-side, lightheartedly nicknaming

themselves the “Q-Tips,” with their efforts funded by a hodgepodge of city, state, or federal grants whenever available. Although they didn't predict spending their days in retirement quite like this, they say this experience has been one of the most meaningful they have had.

The majority of Deb and Peg's work in 2021-2023 was spent driving around the county in the CHC outreach van, purchased through federal pandemic-related funding. They carried vials of refrigerated Covid-19 vaccines, PPE, warm socks, and additional supplies to reach unhoused individuals and other marginalized groups. They frequented city parks, clambered down embankments to camping spots, went to liquor store parking lots and bus stations, and regularly visited more than a dozen shelters and motels, a respite home, private homes, group residences, and even the skatepark. Peg would write vignettes of their experiences caring for, and building relationships with, the folks they met throughout their travels – with names and identifying features changed to protect privacy. One such entry, titled “Thankful,” read:

“...he was checking out of the motel, done with isolation, having tested negative a second time with us. He was using a walker, shuffling off the stair -- a weary and leathery face, maybe 60-something but looking twice that. He craned his neck up at us in the biting cold wind and said, 'I just want to say something – you two treat me with respect. I'm thankful to you guys' He stopped to cough, and then continued, 'You guys are risking your lives for us.'”

At the beginning of 2024, Deb and Peg's work transitioned to providing medical care specifically at three local homeless/warming shelters funded by the state through the City of Burlington. Their interventions have recently included wound care, medication refills, follow-up care after hospitalization, care coordination, assistance with paperwork, and referrals to specialists. The duo's compassionate work has been appreciated by so many – patients, staff, and community partners alike. They said they care for many of the same people they provided vaccines to earlier in the pandemic. As Peg said, “We know them, and they know the two old lady Q-Tips!”

A Note from Jeff

"With continued support from our partners, we are confident that CHC will be here to serve our mission of ensuring ALL patients' access to care."

- Jeff McKee, PsyD, CHC CEO

■ Spring is always such a welcome event in Vermont in which we turn our attention to nature's reemergence and growth. Each spring, CHC develops our financial plan for how we will grow to meet the needs of our community. While our mission remains the same, the specific challenges change each year. Adapting and growing to meet these needs often comes with financial choices that need to be balanced. While being conservative with our expenses, we also realize it is necessary to invest in new projects that are essential to improving care and bolstering our impact in the community.

Our community is growing – and so are the needs of our most vulnerable and disenfranchised neighbors. Through thoughtful investment in programs and services, CHC can keep pace. The intentional sequencing of new initiatives serves a vital need and contributes to our long-term ability to care for patients. With continued support from our partners, we are confident that CHC will be here to serve our mission of ensuring ALL patients' access to care.

While growth means change, one thing remains the same - that is our staff's unwavering commitment to



delivering exceptional care to the community. I am so proud of the CHC team, the work they perform daily, and grateful for the support from our community partners as we continue to plan for the future. Here's to a happy, healthy spring!

Board Member Focus

Board of Directors.

How has your experience been as a Board member?

Being a Board member has introduced me to a group of exceptionally talented, dedicated, and kind people whose paths I may not have crossed otherwise. I have learned enormous amounts about our communities, equity in health care, and the general operations of an FQHC. It has been fascinating, inspiring, and heartwarming.

What do you like best about CHC's work in the community?

The staff and administration of the Community Health Centers are truly dedicated to providing the highest quality, equitable health care to all. I am specifically proud of their commitment to health care for the unhoused, for

the LGBTQIA+ community, the School-Based Dental Center, and the Medication Assisted Treatment program.

Why do you think someone should join our Board?

Supporting this work is a commitment of time, heart, and mind, but the benefits return in multitudes via professional and personal growth, camaraderie with other board members, and the impact of investment into our communities.

We're so appreciative of Holly's commitment to our mission of improving the health of ALL within the communities we serve. Thank you, Holly! If you or someone you know would like to join CHC's Board of Directors, please email ceo@chcb.org.

One-Stop-Shop

■ When touring guests through CHC – Riverside, we often say that the location is a "one-stop-shop" for health care, joking that you can even get your car's oil changed while you're here for a visit. Of course, we aren't *really* automotive experts, but we are proud of the fact that so many services are conveniently offered onsite. Our laboratory, for example, allows patients to get their blood drawn before their appointment, and most often have results by the time they leave. Unfortunately, "most often" doesn't mean "always." Labs that can't be processed in-house are sent offsite and require longer wait times for results. To get closer to "always," we've invested in a new chemistry analyzer – a massive machine used to calculate the



concentration of certain substances within body fluids. Despite most analyzers being replaced or upgraded every five years, our old analyzer was purchased in 2016 as a refurbished instrument.

As this type of equipment ages, it becomes inefficient, costly to repair, and takes extensive time to bring back online. This downtime caused delays in patient results and, in turn, lost revenue for CHC. Purchasing the new machine meant that we had to assess the current laboratory design and renovate the space. To maximize the efficiency of the construction, we recognized that we should also plan for future lab upgrades that will eventually allow for 95% of our lab tests to be done onsite. So, while you still may need to look elsewhere for that oil change, we are pleased that these eventual expanded testing options will help us to continue offering accessible, convenient care to our community.

Onsite Pharmacy Open

■ This past fall, we opened an onsite pharmacy! Accessibly located in the heart of Burlington's Old North End at our CHC - Riverside practice, this service allows community members to refill their prescriptions before they leave the building. The CHC – Pharmacy accepts all major insurances, including Medicaid and Medicare.

For many years, we have been part of a Federally Qualified Health Center pharmacy network which offers eligible patients reduced-cost prescriptions, saving patients roughly \$2 million annually. In adding our own pharmacy onsite, we have taken the next step in ensuring accessibility to medications for community members. Adding a physical pharmacy into our array



of services is a proactive approach that ensures that no matter what is happening in the local and national pharmaceutical landscape, our patients are protected.