

THE FREE CLINIC TIMES

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT....

Happy Holidays!

This has been a very busy and productive year for our Association and member clinics. I enjoyed seeing all of you at our annual conference and hope that everyone was able to gain new ideas and return to work with a revitalized sense of purpose!

The mission of the Ohio Association of Free Clinics (O AFC) is to "advocate on the behalf of free clinics and the patients they serve." Today I would like to describe how we are fulfilling the second half of our mission and highlight several patient advocacy activities in which the O AFC is involved.

The primary manner in which we advocate for our patients on broad policy issues is through the Legislative Committee. This com-

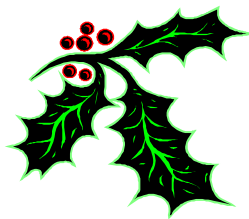
mittee consists of several dedicated representatives from member clinics who meet on a monthly basis to review pending state legislation. The committee makes recommendations to the Board of Trustees regarding whether the O AFC should take a position on legislation. We then send letters and lobby legislators in order to make them aware of the Association's stance. Recent legislation for which the O AFC has advocated includes Senate Bill 86, which expands the charitable immunity law, Senate Bill 138/House Bill 311, which creates Ohio's Best Rx and House Bill 225, the most recent version of the mental health parity legislation. We were also involved in advocacy efforts to maintain Medicaid coverage during the state budget deliberations.

Advocating on behalf of our

patients is one of the most important things we can do as free clinics since the uninsured have no collective, organized voice. I strongly encourage you to invite your state representative and senator to your clinic in the month of December/January (while they are on break from session) and show them how you are serving your patients and their constituents!

2004 promises to be an exciting year and I look forward to working with you in serving the uninsured and underserved in our communities!

Lee Elmore, President



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

Members of the O AFC are invited to participate in a **Strategic Planning Retreat** which will begin on **Thursday, March 18, 2004 at 2:00 p.m.** and will conclude on **Friday, March 19 at 2:00 p.m.** The Retreat will take place at the Columbus Medical Association and Foundation. Please join us in visioning and planning the future of the O AFC!

Also, the date for the **Fifth Annual Ohio Free Clinic Conference** (can you believe it??) has been set for **October 10-12, 2004**. Location TBA



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CURRENT LEGISLATION

House Bill 215 (Representative Schmidt-R)—Allows either party to a medical claim to require the medical claim to be reviewed by a medical review panel prior to proceeding in court.

Status: Introduced 6/6/03, Assigned to House Insurance Committee—receiving hearings

OAFC Position: None

House Bill 225 (Representative Olman-R)—Requires health insuring companies to cover basic health care services for biologically based mental illnesses.

Status: Voted out of House Health and Family Services Committee on 12/10/03

OAFC Position: Support

House Bill 311 (Representative Hagan-R)—Creates Ohio's Best Rx Program, a prescription drug discount program for all Ohioans without drug coverage and incomes below 250% of FPL and all Ohioans over 60 regardless of income.

Status: Voted out of the House on 12/10/03, will go to Governor for signature

OAFC Position: Support

Senate Bill 86 (Senator Stivers-R)—Extends immunity from liability for services provided by volunteer health care professionals to additional health care facilities and locations and to nonprofit health care referral organizations. Increases the maximum allowable income of individuals who may be served by volunteers having immunity from liability to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Status: Passed by the Senate 6/10/03, Passed by the House 12/10/03, Senate Concurred 12/10/03, will go to Governor for signature

OAFC Position: Support

Senate Bill 124 (Senator Amstutz-R)—Amends the charitable immunity act to allow minor surgical procedures. Requested by the Ohio Association of Free Clinics.

Status: Introduced 9/2/03, Assigned to Senate Judiciary-Civil Justice Committee

OAFC Position: Support

Senate Bill 138 (Sponsored by Senator Spada-R)—Creates Ohio's Best Rx Program, a prescription drug discount program for all Ohioans without drug coverage and incomes below 250% of FPL and all Ohioans over 60 regardless of income.

Status: Voted out of the Senate on 12/9/03, will go to Governor for signature

OAFC Position: Support

Senate Bill 153 (Sponsored by Senator Jacobson-R)—Imposes various reporting, auditing, and other requirements on persons who receive public money for the provision of services and to provide civil remedies for the misuse of public money.

Status: Introduced 11/20/03, Assigned to Senate Finance and received sponsor testimony on 12/9/03

OAFC Position: None

More information: Go to www.legislature.state.oh.us or call Amy at (614) 221-6494.

LEGISLATIVE VISITS

We strongly urge you to invite the legislators that represent your service area to your clinic while they are on holiday break in December and January!

This is a great opportunity to develop a relationship with these elected officials. With the tobacco budget coming up early next year, these relationships will be critically important. When meeting with elected officials remember to:

- Do your homework—know their background, interests, and research any legislation they have championed
- Develop a brief message and chose a spokesperson
- Avoid jargon (especially medical)
- Show your appreciation—follow up with a thank you note



“WE MUST NOT, IN TRYING TO THINK ABOUT HOW WE CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE, IGNORE THE SMALL DAILY DIFFERENCES WE CAN MAKE WHICH, OVER TIME, ADD UP TO BIG DIFFERENCES THAT WE OFTEN CANNOT FORESEE.”

MARIAN WRIGHT

DECEMBER IS AIDS AWARENESS MONTH

On December 1, people and organizations across the world participated in World AIDS Day with events aimed at commemorating those who have died as well as advocating for current AIDS patients and prevention efforts. In conjunction with World AIDS Day, December 1 was also the 15th National Day Without Art, which is designed to illustrate the impact that AIDS has had on members of the creative/artistic community.

Some statistics:

- More than 58 million people worldwide have been infected with AIDS and 22 million of them have died.
- Globally, 1 out of 100 people aged 15-49 has HIV/AIDS.
- In the United States, between 800,000 and 900,000 are currently living with AIDS. An additional 440,000 have died.

- The number of new infections in the U.S. annually is 40,000.

- Minority individuals and poor people living in urban areas are disproportionately affected by HIV infection.

- Education regarding AIDS transmission and prevention continues to be critical in containing the spread of the disease.

*Information is from www.aidsscience.com and The Center for Disease Control National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention



HELP END LEAD POISONING (H.E.L.P.) IN OHIO

Did you know?

In the state of Ohio there is a pollutant that silently and insidiously poisons thousands of children each year. These children may not appear ill, but lead poisoning causes irreparable brain damage, mental retardation, learning disabilities and other irreversible physical and mental harm. High levels of lead are found in and around homes built prior to 1978, the year lead based paint and gasoline were banned in the United States. Since that time there has been a significant decrease in the incidence of lead poisoning, although the lead that remains can be swallowed or ingested by small children with devastating affects. However, with education and outreach, lead poisoning is entirely preventable.

Children from ages 6 months to 6 years (the earlier the better) who live in housing built prior to 1978 should be tested. This test is required of all children on Medicaid. A simple blood test tells the level of lead in the blood. Above a certain level, the home is required to be investigated to see if it is the source of lead. Peeling paint and dust from the opening and shutting of windows are the most common sources of lead. Soil can also be source. If found, lead can be dealt with in one of two ways - abatement which requires the removal of the lead source by a licensed lead worker or containment whereby the source of lead is contained, again by a licensed lead

worker.

HELP (Help End Lead Poisoning) is a non profit advocacy organization committed to eliminating lead poisoning. In recent years, it has focused on the passage of Sub. House Bill 248 which updates Ohio law in regard to lead poisoning prevention. Sub HB 248 is in the rule making/reviewing process and will go into effect in April of 2004. HELP's role is to educate parents, property owners, housing contractors and the public about lead hazards and how they are to be dealt with under this legislation.

HELP is also engaged with lead poisoning prevention outreach education in partnership with a faith based organization in Columbus. Our goal is to meet with parents, care givers, property owners, child care providers and others to teach them about lead poisoning prevention.

HELP is available for consultation about how to educate your community about lead poisoning prevention. We are supported by membership dues and encourage you to become involved. We have general meetings every 2 months where a topic of interest is presented. A bi-monthly newsletter is also distributed. For further information about HELP and how you can learn more about lead poisoning prevention, please call 614 469-6392 or e mail no_lead2002@yahoo.com.

—Submitted by Marian Harris, HELP

COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK 2004

Cover the Uninsured Week has been set for May 10-16, 2004. According to The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, sponsor of the event, "this national initiative aims to make the issue of the uninsured-and solutions to the problem-a central part of national discussions through public education and community events."*

On December 8th, RWJF announced that Noah Wyle, star of the television drama "ER," will serve as the national spokesperson for *Cover the Uninsured Week 2004*. A group of former U.S. Surgeon Generals and U.S. Secretaries of Health and Human Services have pledged support for this effort in addition to former U.S. Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, who will serve as honorary co-chairs of the event.

"*Cover the Uninsured Week 2004* will build on the unprecedented success of *Cover the Uninsured Week 2003*. Held in March, the event

brought together more than 800 national and local organizations to sponsor nearly 900 public events in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. *Cover the Uninsured Week 2004* will commence with a national kick-off event, followed by more than 1,000 events held by community groups from coast to coast. Next year's effort will also feature physicians, nurses and other health professionals who donate a portion of time during the week to care for the uninsured."*

To get more information about becoming involved, visit www.covertheuninsured.org or www.CoverTheUninsuredWeek.org. As always, you can also contact the Ohio Association of Free Clinics with any questions.

*Taken from 9/30/03 press release from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

"NO ONE HAS
FAILURE WHO HAS
FRIENDS."

IT'S A
WONDERFUL LIFE



OHIO FREE CLINICS CONFERENCE IS A SUCCESS!!

We are pleased to report that the Fourth Annual Ohio Free Clinic Conference in October was a great success, with a 46% increase in attendance over last year! Twelve physicians attended the conference, including nine family physicians. A pediatrician who was instru-



Amy Rohling (O AFC Executive Director), Dr. Viola Startzman (Viola Startzman Free Clinic, Wooster), and Lee Elmore (O AFC Board President and Executive Director of North Coast Health Ministry, Lakewood) at the Ohio Free Clinic Conference

mental in starting a free clinic in Wooster, Dr. Viola Startzman, was awarded the Champion of Free Clinics award.

Participants cleared felt that the conference, along with the nineteen workshops offered, was worthwhile. Here are some quotes from the evaluations: "An introduction to the nuts and bolts of how some of the most wonderful, service-minded people in Ohio are addressing the health care needs of their neighbors", "SO many ideas, so much information. Can't wait to get to work. This has

been most helpful!", "The O AFC Conference was very professionally done. Excellent workshops and networking opportunities." Attendees particularly enjoyed the keynote address by Dr. Harry Johns (see page 5).

Please mark your calendars for the Fifth Annual Ohio Free Clinic Conference which will take place October 10-12, 2004 in Columbus, Ohio. If you would like to be involved in planning next year's conference, please contact Amy at (614) 221-6494.



Conference attendees visit exhibitors.

- O AFC Members:**
- Asian Health Initiative
 - Clinic at Faith Mission
 - Columbus Free Clinic
 - Free Clinic of Greater Cleveland
 - Free Medical Clinic of Marion
 - Good Neighbor House
 - Health Partners of Miami County
 - Lake County Free Clinic
 - Lorain County Free Clinic
 - Physicians Free Clinic
 - Reach Out of Montgomery County
 - North Coast Health Ministry
 - OPEN M's Summit County Free Clinic
 - Short North Health & Wellness
 - Townhall II Medical Clinic
 - Viola Startzman Free Clinic
 - Wheeling Health Right
 - Western Stark Medical Clinic

“IN THE DEW OF THOUGHTFUL THINGS”, BY DR. HARRY JOHNS

Dr. Harry Johns inspired attendees at the Fourth Annual Ohio Free Clinic Conference with his keynote address. Here is an excerpt of his remarks:

“You make that difference through the service you provide in the clinics.

Service in the clinic gives you the strength to change suffering to joy, sickness to health and despair to hope. Service brings happiness, service comforts our souls and enriches our

perceptions. It has been said that ‘service to others is the rent we pay for inhabiting this earth.’ Service is the spirit that permeates your clinics. It is the true essence of your organizations. It is invisible, intangible and sometimes inexplicable. Yet, this spirit brings meaning and substance to your organizations.

You make a difference in your respective communities. Through service to others, you have become a treasure in those communities. For every time you offer a helping hand, every time you show a person you care and understand, every time you have a kind gentle word to give—you help someone find beauty in this precious life we live.

‘To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch. Or a redeemed social condition; to know that anyone’s life has breathed easier because you lived — that is to have succeeded.’—Ralph Waldo Emerson

I say to you without hesitation that you have succeeded and are succeeding. I believe we all have an obligation to extend a helping hand to those in need. A hundred years from now,



Harry Johns, PhD

it won’t matter what your bank account was, the sort of house you lived in or the kind of car you drove. But the world may be different because you gave a little piece of yourself to help another.

In today’s environment, the free clinics will, no doubt, run up against difficult times, but as the Bible says, ‘be not weary in well-doing, for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not.’ Continue to look beyond yourselves in service to others. For, one loses him or herself in the intoxicating spirit of being a part of something greater than him or herself.

Remember...you are unique. You can do things no one else can do. You can be things no one else can be. You can touch the lives of other people in a way that only you can. You become a blessing to someone...and your purpose in this world can be fulfilled by no one but you.

So, continue to reach out to help those who will benefit from your experiences and your intelligence. I think of the clinics as altars with an eternal fire. And from its flame, clinic volunteers light their torches to bring light and warmth to others.

There are many grand things in this world, but the grandest thing next to the radiance that flows from the almighty throne is a long and beautiful life wrapping itself in benediction to God and in service to mankind. Service not for self, but service above self---the thoughtfulness of others. And in the dew of thoughtful things, the heart is refreshed and finds its true meaning.”

THE HARTVILLE MIGRANT CLINIC, BY DR. THERESA WURST

When I took over the position as the supervising physician at the Hartville Migrant Clinic three years ago I could not have imagined how rewarding this experience would be to me both personally and professionally. The clinic, in rural Hartville, Ohio, is run out of a small white farmhouse.

Every year, about 400 migrant farm workers come from Florida, Texas, and Mexico to work in the rich black soil which grows an abundant supply of various vegetables. The families live in crowded row-houses and run-down trailers with only a community bath and shower house shared by all. The work day is long, hot, and sometimes very wet (especially this past summer). To keep the black dirt and fertilizer off their skin, they wear head scarves, hats, long sleeves, and thick rubber overalls even in the scorching 90

degree heat. Despite the conditions, I am touched by their sense of appreciation to have a job that allows them to support their families better than they could in Mexico.

The migrant workers, who are 99% Hispanic, have a value system which puts priorities in the following order: first God, then family, work, with education coming last. Sunday is their only day off which includes church services, men’s soccer games on a field provided by the growers, and lots of good food and family time. While all of the children are bilingual, only a small portion of the adults speak English. Having forgotten most of my high school Spanish, I began studying medical Spanish frantically. At first the interpreters had to do most of the communicating for me, but after three

(continued on page 6)



OHIO ASSOCIATION OF FREE CLINICS

65 Jefferson Avenue
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Dates to remember:

March 18-19, 2004 Strategic Planning Retreat
October 10-12, 2004 Fifth Annual Ohio Free
Clinic Conference

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**ACTING AS AN ADVOCATE FOR FREE
CLINICS AND THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE.**

www.ohiofreeclinics.org

("Hartville Migrant Clinic", continued from page 5)

years, I can get through a visit to the office on my own (sometimes with the help of Spanish/English dictionary).

Communicating is only part of the battle. I had to gain their trust in a country which is not always friendly to immigrants, many of whom are here illegally. After the first year, the women came to trust me which was evident by the dramatic increase in number of visits. Also, I was often brought home-cooked, delicious Mexican dishes for lunch as a token of their appreciation. It was not until the second year that the men trusted a female physician enough to start coming to the clinic. Now I have many regular male patients. The children come frequently as well, especially since they like to choose a free toy from our toy box.

The medical problems encountered are often the same as those seen in my office like respiratory infections, muscle and joint pain, reflux, etc. However, the biggest learning opportunity for me came when we decided to start screening patients for tuberculosis. So far almost a third of the patients have latent TB. We had one active case of TB last year.

Our clinic is staffed by nurse practitioner faculty and their students from Kent State University, volunteer pediatricians and internists from the North Canton Medical Foundation, as well as Aultman Family Practice residents supervised by me. We also frequently have medical students from NEOUCOM seeing patients with me during the growing season which runs from May through October. Since it is a walk-in clinic, we never know whether there will be 10 or 40 people coming to be seen for a half day. Many times we work without eating all day in the hot, crowded clinic. Then I have to remind myself that my work conditions are much better than theirs. Since my faith is very important to me, I believe God calls me to serve these people who have touched my life in so many ways. They have showed me that faith, family and friends are really the important things in life. While they are very poor, they are happier than many of my patients who have many more material things. Hopefully during this Holiday Season, we can all remember what is really important in our lives.