

# The Free Clinic Times

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**Staff:**  
**Amy Rohling McGee**  
Executive Director  
[amcgee@ohiofreeclinics.org](mailto:amcgee@ohiofreeclinics.org)

**Lynn W. Slawsky**  
Program Assistant  
[lslawsky@ohiofreeclinics.org](mailto:lslawsky@ohiofreeclinics.org)

614.221.6494 (phone)  
614.228.7445 (fax)  
[www.ohiofreeclinics.org](http://www.ohiofreeclinics.org)

## Free Clinic Impact Stories...

*A "Free to be Healthy" Success at Wheeling Health Right*

*By Kathie Brown, Executive Director*

When Ruth joined the Free to be Healthy group at the Belmont County Division of Wheeling Health Right, she was sure it was just another "soon to be failed" attempt to improve her health. Like so many, she had tried and failed several times to eat right, exercise more, and lose weight. At age 47, she was convinced it was too late for her to change her eating habits and sedentary lifestyle.

Her medical history included poor nutrition, hypertension and a recent heart attack. The nurse practitioner at the clinic encouraged her to talk to the health educator about participating in a new program being offered at the clinic, the "Free to be Healthy" class.

Joyce Zambito, RN, MS, CDE, talked with Ruth at length about the program and she decided it was worth trying. At the initial class, Joyce explained the goals of the program, and Ruth realized she was not only going to learn how to eat properly, but also about

the importance of exercise and weight loss to her overall health.

The program included sessions about proper nutrition and portion control, stress management, a personal trainer to address proper exercise techniques, and a support system that included the health educators and others

***At the initial class, Joyce explained the goals of the program, and Ruth realized she was not only going to learn how to eat properly, but also about the importance of exercise and weight loss to her overall health.***

participating in the classes.

Ruth was very faithful in her weekly attendance, and began to see a difference on the scales and in how she was feeling. She eventually increased her walking regimen to four times a week, which helped her

physically and mentally. By the completion of the 6-month program, she was exercising regularly, eating properly, had lost 30 pounds, and is much happier with herself and her lifestyle. Ruth recently had an appointment with her physician who hardly recognized her due to her weight loss and change in attitude.

This program has been so successful at the Belmont County Division of Wheeling Health Right, that several participants in the program persuaded our health educators to continue the program after the grant ended. It is inspiring to me to see our patients so involved in their own health care. Our health care team works very hard to empower the patients to become healthier. This grant has been a catalyst for 84 patients to improve their weight, BMI, blood pressure, blood glucose and other health care factors. We are proud to have been a part of the program and hope to participate in future grant opportunities.

*Free to Be Healthy was supported by a grant from the Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation. For more information, please see page 4.*

**Anthem**  



## Cover the Uninsured Week

The fifth annual Cover the Uninsured Week is gearing up to promote SCHIP reauthorization, expanded Medicaid coverage, and other measures to increase access to health care in the United States.

Cover the Uninsured Week is the largest mobilization in history to create awareness of the need for addressing the uninsured, according to its sponsor, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Foundation focuses on pressing health and health care issues facing our country, and develops recommendations on improving health for all Americans.

This year the campaign will focus on covering America's children, according to Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, President and CEO of the Foundation. "Ten years ago with bipartisan support, Congress enacted the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Now Congress has the opportunity to reauthorize and reinvigorate the program. Cover the Uninsured Week will shine a light on the success and promise of this valuable program to cover uninsured children," she commented.

Visit [www.covertheuninsuredweek.org](http://www.covertheuninsuredweek.org) to download a Health and Enrollment Fair Planning Guide, a

## President's Letter

Since its inception in November 2000, it has been with great admiration and amazement that I have witnessed and participated in the growth of the Ohio Association of Free Clinics.

Today, it is my privilege to serve as the new O AFC Board President. Thank you to all members of our Association who make this position a worthwhile honor.

Entering the new year has brought a renewed sense of enthusiasm, new initiatives and the potential for greater growth. O AFC will continue involvement in advocacy on a variety of fronts. We will open more doors to health care access by pursuing and sustaining new resources for the Association and its membership.

O AFC will continue to provide quality learning and networking opportunities to bring together Free Clinic staff, volunteers and professionals from all areas who are dedicated to helping the uninsured.

Our next opportunity will be on April 18, 2007, when O AFC will host member



free clinics at a Statehouse Legislative Day in Columbus, Ohio. The day will underscore the importance of the legislative process and relationships that our free clinic can develop with Senators and Representatives.

I encourage you to arrange for legislators in your district to visit and learn about your clinic and plan to participate in our first Legislative Day.

Thank you for all your hard work and creativity toward making O AFC such a strong organization as we mobilize our resources, strengthen our member clinics and provide a powerful voice for all Ohioans who are underserved in 2007.

**Paul Baumgartner, President**

guide to working with the media, a guide to editorial placement, and more.

Also available on the website are fact sheets and charts/graphs about the country's uninsured. These are great resources for use any time of the year.

Or call 202.572.2928 to have materials mailed to you.

O AFC encourages all member free clinics to learn more about becoming involved in the Week's activities, in order to promote the expansion of health coverage to the 1.4 million uninsured Ohioans.



To learn more, visit [www.covertheuninsuredweek.org](http://www.covertheuninsuredweek.org)

# Free Clinics Benefit from Court Settlement

Twelve Ohio free clinics recently utilized funds from a lawsuit settlement to provide more mental and physical health services.

In April of 2006, then Attorney General Jim Petro announced that \$5 million had been seized through a court settlement with an organization in Cincinnati.

The Ohio Association of Free Clinics received \$150,000 as part of the settlement. Free clinics that applied for and received shares of the settlement agreed to the Attorney General's provisions to "provide medical and therapeutic services to persons born with a birth defect or suffering from any other significant mental or physical disability." Funding needed to be above and beyond what the free clinic offers.

Such services were provided to patients with diabetes, hypertension, asthma, severe mental illness, cancer, stroke, and/or COPD.

Ten of the twelve free clinics were able to offer prescription services through the settlement funding. Other services included primary care, vaccinations, immunizations, laboratory/ X-ray services, and mental health counseling.

The Columbus Medical Association's Physicians Free Clinic used some of their funding to purchase hearing aids and glucometer strips. Katie Clark, Director of the clinic, reported "The patients were extremely grateful... a lot of them called to thank us for the hearing aids." She also noted that "the doctors are really excited to have the [glucometer strips] available for our

diabetic patients." Another clinic, Wheeling Health Right, has been able to offer 25% more counseling sessions and prescriptions because of the settlement funding.

"We have realized that the stresses on the lives of people in poverty takes a greater toll on their bodies than is true for people with adequate financial resources," according to Kathie Brown, director of Wheeling Health Right. "[That is why] the need for psychiatric medications at our clinic is so great."

The spending cycle for this settlement ended on December 31, 2006.



## Thank You Donors!

Thanks to the following contributors and supporters of the OAFC in 2006:

Mr. Paul Baumgartner	Express Scripts
Mr. Garry Beltz	George Gund Foundation
Ms. Kathie Brown	GlaxoSmithKline
Mr. Joe Chu	Legacy Medical
Ms. Katie Clark	National Association of Free Clinics
Dr. Ed Dunham	National City Bank
Mr. Patrick Ecklar	NEOUCOM
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## Ohio's Best Rx Program is Expanding

Legislation enhancing the Ohio's Best Rx (OBRx) program was recently enacted and will take effect April 4, 2007. The following changes will occur:

- Increase the income eligibility limit from 250% to 300% Federal Poverty Level
- Allow online and telephone submission of applications
- Allow OBRx card to be used during the Medicare Part D "doughnut hole"
- Waive the 4-month waiting period for eligibility for laid-off employees

Beginning July 1, 2007, OBRx will merge with the Golden Buckeye discount prescription drug card program. The merge is expected to help 120,000 current Golden Buckeye Card holders to receive greater discounts.

Ohio's best Rx is a prescription drug discount card program designed to lower the cost of prescriptions for qualifying Ohio residents without prescription drug insurance coverage. To read more about the changes to the program, go to <http://www.oahca.org/resources/OBRxJanuary2007Newsletter.pdf>.

# Free to Be Healthy Program Update

More than 450 people at 4 free clinics around Ohio participated in a weight-loss program called Free to be Healthy last year. The number of participants was 25% higher than expected, and results exceeded expectations across the board.

Free to be Healthy began in October of 2005, with generous support from the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation. The program aimed to treat overweight or obese patients in free clinics. More physical activity, better nutrition, and positive lifestyle changes were core components.

Seventy-one (71%) percent of the participants improved in one or more risk factors over 6 months. Also, 55% of the participants achieved at least a 5% reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI) over 6 months.

All participating free clinics noted specific success stories, such as at:

- Health Partners of Miami County, where a woman who lost 36 pounds and 13.5 inches to her waist has exhibited more self-confidence by styling her hair, smiling more and walking longer periods;
- Open M, where one young man lost 37.6 pounds, and his father lost 26.6;
- Total Living Center, where a man has increased his exercise stamina from 1/8 mile to 3/4 mile, and lost 36 pounds in 6 months;
- Wheeling Health Right, where one woman commented, "I am eating more healthy foods, exercising 4 times per week and have lost 23 pounds. My blood sugar has decreased and I feel better than I have in years."

Some free clinics used the funding to set up partnerships. For example, at Health Partners of

Miami County, "We worked with OSU-Extension, which provided helpful cooking classes at our free clinic," said Deb Miller, Executive Director of Health Partners.

Wheeling Health Right hired a personal trainer. "She was able to work on specific problems such as arthritis and heart conditions. She [taught] proper techniques for exercise and yoga," according to Joyce Zambito, Health Educator for Wheeling Health Right.

Funding also was used to purchase materials for staff and participants. These ranged from MedGem (a device to measure resting metabolic rate) and larger scales to pedometers, Therabands, and measuring cups/spoons.

The program highlighted challenges that participants faced as well. A 6-month commitment was asked of each participant, but because of work constraints, transportation issues, and/or motivation, all the free clinics struggled to retain participants for that time period.

Health Partners of Miami County used one-week goals, such as: "This week try to eat breakfast, this week try to eat healthy snacks....," Miller reported. Wheeling Health Right offered 2 classes each week, which increased the likelihood that participants could attend.

Those who were able to make the 6-month commitment had impressive results. The chart below shows how many participants experienced improvements in physical risk factors by committing for at least 6 months.

Based on recent success, as well as suggestions for improvement from last year's participating free clinics, OAFIC is working to expand the program statewide. Stay tuned for more details!

# National Provider Identifiers:

## What is Required of Free Clinics?

Does your free clinic need to obtain a National Provider Identifier (NPI)? Please note that while the Ohio Association of Free Clinics is pleased to provide general information about this question, we strongly urge you to consult an attorney who is knowledgeable about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regarding your clinic's particular situation.

The purpose of an NPI is "to uniquely identify a health care provider in standard transactions.... on prescriptions, in internal files to link proprietary provider identification numbers and other information, in patient medical record systems, and in program integrity files," according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.

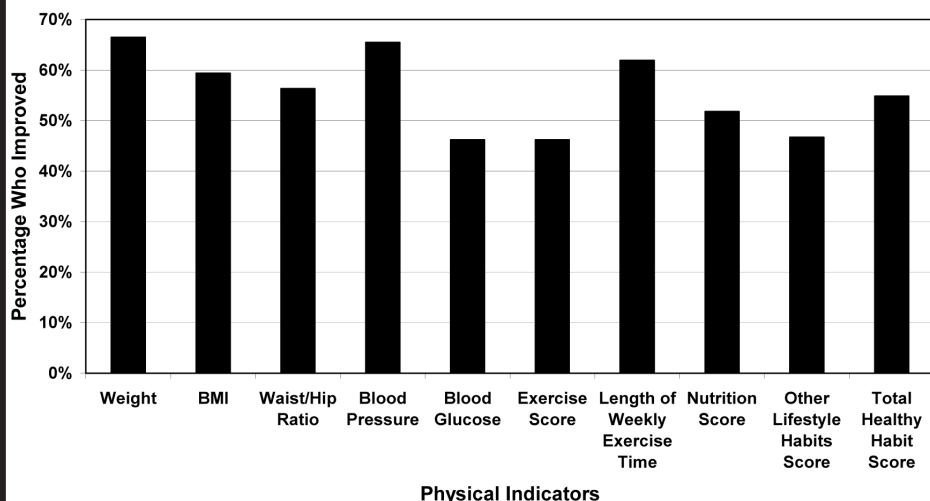
All health care providers are permitted to obtain an NPI. According to HIPAA, a health care provider is "any person or organization who furnishes, bills, or is paid for health care in the normal course of business." Therefore, a free clinic is permitted to obtain an NPI.

Only covered health care providers are required to obtain an NPI. Generally speaking, only providers that are transmitting electronic data as a part of a covered transaction are considered covered health care providers.

Based on this definition, many free clinics are not required to obtain an NPI, but some may be. As mentioned earlier, it is advisable to seek legal counsel in order to determine this for your free clinic.

**There is no fee for obtaining an NPI, and the application takes about 20 minutes to complete. For more information, and to download or request the application please refer to: <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/StaticForward.do?forward=static.npistart>.**

**Chart 1: Physical Improvements among Free to be Healthy Participants Who Remained in the Program for at least 6 Months**



# Development Matters: A Meal that Heals, Viola Startzman Free Clinic



**O**n January 29, 2007, the Viola Startzman Free Clinic, in Wooster, Ohio, raised over \$13,000 from a fundraiser called *A Meal that Heals*. Below is an interview with the volunteer coordinator for the clinic, Cyndi O'Donnell.

## **O AFC: Cyndi, what was *A Meal that Heals*, and how did the idea develop?**

**Cyndi:** The owner of T.J.'s, A Trio of Restaurants, wanted to host fundraisers to raise money for different non-profits. We were the first organization chosen.

A \$25 meal ticket was sold for use on January 29th. [Viola Startzman] received \$15 from every ticket. Additionally, if any patron ordered an appetizer or dessert, [the clinic] received 25% of that.

We also had 10 different raffle baskets, and celebrity bartenders who [carried around] tip jars.

## **O AFC: How much did you raise altogether?**

**Cyndi:** We sold 623 tickets. We raised over \$2000 in the basket raffles alone, and about \$500 from the celebrity bartenders. We netted over \$13,000.

## **O AFC: What all went into preparing for and publicizing the event?**

**Cyndi:** Viola Startzman paid for printing the tickets, and poster development.

[A local grocery store] stuffed flyers in the grocery bags, and displayed signs outside. We sold tickets there, at the free clinic, and a local bank.

Local cable TV stations and a local radio station interviewed us about the details. We didn't pay for any of that publicity.

We also advertised through the United Way....all staff and volunteers got a copy of the flyer on Adobe and emailed it to every one we know.

## **O AFC: Who participated in this planning and publicity, and how long did you have to finalize all the preparations?**

**Cyndi:** We recruited a planning committee, and volunteers to help with serving.

The owner wanted to have [A Meal that Heals] on a less busy night, so it could beef up their business. We ended up with only 4 months to plan.

## **O AFC: How would you advise other free clinics interested in this type of fundraiser?**

**Cyndi:** It would take another special restaurant to be on board, because the owner was really committed to making it work.

## **O AFC: Would you do it again?**

**Cyndi:** Oh yes! And we hope to with T.J.'s.

Cyndi O'Donnell can be reached at 330.252.2500 for more information about *A Meal that Heals* or other fundraisers at Viola Startzman Free Clinic.

***If you have a great development idea that should be featured in upcoming Development Matters, please contact Lynn W. Slawsky at 614.221.6494, or [lslawsky@ohiofreeclinics.org](mailto:lslawsky@ohiofreeclinics.org).***

## Customer Service Matters: By Susan Keane Baker

### **How To Respond To An Angry Complaint... And preserve your relationship**

Here are some steps for handling angry complaints so that they don't consume more time and energy than necessary:

- Move the patient to a quiet area. In a low, calm tone of voice, say to the person, "Let's step over here to talk. That way, we won't be interrupted."
- Let the patient speak his/her mind without interruption.
- Avoid rationalizing (acknowledge the difficulty). Consider whether your rationalization is an explanation or an excuse.
- Respectfully use the patient's name in your reply.

• Demonstrate your understanding (express empathy). If sincere, use the "feel, felt, found" technique. For example: "I understand how you feel I've felt that way too when....What I've found is that...."

- Take action—be an advocate.



*Susan Keane Baker, MHA, is the author of Managing Patient Expectations: The Art of Finding & Keeping Loyal Patients. Her book has been ranked #3 on Amazon.com's list of 100 top sellers in the general medicine category.*

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**Ohio Association of Free Clinics**

61 Jefferson Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43215

**Amy Rohling McGee, Executive Director**  
Email: [amcgee@ohiofreeclinics.org](mailto:amcgee@ohiofreeclinics.org)  
Phone: 614.221.6494  
[www.ohiofreeclinics.org](http://www.ohiofreeclinics.org)

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**Save the Date:**



**April 18:**  
OAFc  
Legislative  
Lobbying Day

**October 7-9:**  
Ohio Free Clinic  
Conference

**Other Notable Dates:**

**April 2-8:**  
National Public Health Week

**May 1-31:**  
American Stroke Month



*"The people that get on in this world are the people that get up and look for the circumstances that they want; and if they can't find them, they make them." — George Bernard Shaw*

**Is your free clinic aware of discount prescription medications at local retailers? Many grocery stores and drug stores offer \$4 rates on 30-day generic prescriptions, or other discounts.**

**For more information you can download the Discount/Free Generic Medicines fact sheet from the OAFc website: <http://www.ohiofreeclinics.org/MemberResources.htm>**