Medical Services Offered at Catholic Charities Reduces Strain on Local Emergency Rooms

Imagine that you fall off your bike and get a nasty cut. Naturally, you might rush to the Emergency Room for stitches. But what do you do if you are homeless and don't have the resources or insurance? You might dash over to the Marian House to see a medical professional at the SET Homeless Clinic, where they can not only stitch you up, but give you the medicine you need, all free of charge, on a walk-in basis M-F, 11 am - 1 pm.

The SET Homeless Clinic, one of several SET Family Medical Clinics throughout Colorado Springs, provides healthcare to the un-insured and under-insured, five days a week. Jason Jones, Clinic Coordinator, says, “Not everyone who comes through the soup kitchen is homeless. We have a lot of low income seniors and working poor, and because of that, most of the people we see are over fifty.” Most frequent ailments include abscessed teeth, cuts, infected fingers, and asthma. The volunteer staff also assists clients in accessing other health care resources, providing hygiene products, and conducting a sock exchange to help in preventative care. The clinic dispenses over-the-counter pain medication and provides health education as well.

When a client first walks through the doors of the Marian House, they may be met by a Client Navigator who directs them to the services they need. If it is medical assistance, acute or otherwise, they either meet with someone at the SET Clinic or with the Penrose-St. Francis Faith Community Nurse. The SET Clinic serves as the foundation for medical services at the Marian House; however, to get other services, like mental health care, the client must have some form of insurance. Centura Health and Peak Vista are on site several days a week to help enroll clients in Medicaid and SNAP. Once the clients have Medicaid, they can access AspenPointe to receive behavioral health care.

The extensive support and network of partners in the local community helps Catholic Charities uphold its core values and principles of human dignity, common good, and solidarity with the poor. Velda Baker, a Penrose-St. Francis Faith Community Nurse, works two days a week at the Marian House. She says, “To be able to treat the whole person, not just the burned hand or the sprained ankle, but to treat the whole person, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, is a very important component of this job.” She provides a professional assessment for everyone who sees her for an appointment. If a client comes in for one specific reason, through thorough questioning, Velda would be (cont’d page 3 - Medical Partners)
While the circumstances that lead people to poverty, and keep them stuck there, are complex and varied, there are a couple of larger themes that consistently impact our poor. At some level, poverty is about loss: the loss of a job, loss of housing or the loss of family or community support. Yet the loss of health -- physical or mental -- can be more devastating than any and, very often, it is the cause for one of those other setbacks.

This is no revelation. Throughout the gospels, Jesus encounters the poor and the sick almost interchangeably. Of the six acts Jesus teaches us to do for our “least brothers” in Matthew 25, “caring for the ill” is the fifth. This work is a rich part of the history of the Christian Church as well. Dr. Abraham Nussbaum, a psychiatrist at Denver Health, writes in his book The Finest Traditions of My Calling about Basil of Caesarea, a Bishop who in 370 C.E. built “a ptochotropeion, or house for the poor, ill, and the dispossessed.” Dr. Nussbaum goes on to appropriately re-frame Basil’s “house for the poor” as “the first hospital in Western society.” In the United States, some of our greatest modern hospital systems trace their founding to Catholic and Christian churches. In Colorado Springs, we are blessed by the courageous work of the Sisters of St. Francis who started our first hospital and the Sisters of Charity who helped make Penrose-St. Francis one of the best in the nation.

At Catholic Charities, we have been inspired and energized by the same observations that would have guided Basil of Caesarea so long ago. While less visible than some of our larger operations, providing access to health care is a critical component of the work we do. It is also profoundly collaborative and we rely on invaluable partners in this work. Throughout the course of a week, the Hanifen Center is shared with our Faith Community Nurse, provided by Penrose-St. Francis, our safety net Homeless Clinic provided by SET Medical Clinics, and our on-site mental health professional provided by AspenPointe. Together, these three agencies and their incredible staff and volunteers provide our guests with some of the most essential services they can receive under our roof. Additionally, our local Community Health Partnership (CHP) and Peak Vista are valued collaborators with everything from needs assessments to Medicaid enrollment.

There exists a great opportunity to do more around health and wellness because, in spite of our efforts, the barriers to care for our poor remain difficult to overcome. This reality is one of the reasons we are excited this spring to be starting work on an innovative Peer Navigator program that was made possible by a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation. Our vision for this two year grant is the development and implementation of a model that will allow us to train our clients to become resources to work with the complex systems of healthcare in our community. Research shows that healthcare needs are negatively impacted by system complexities and by lack of trust, which makes these Peer Navigators uniquely well-equipped to guide others. At the same time, by providing these individuals with basic health coaching skills, we hope to “move upstream” in our ability to have greater impact on preventative health.

Our over-arching goal at Catholic Charities is to help people move from crisis to stability. The reality for those who are struggling in poverty is that they face multiple crises simultaneously. This is one of the main reasons that single, stand alone acts of charity have little long term benefit. Certainly, those emergency services have a time and a place, but in order to bring lasting change for those we serve, we look toward the root causes of poverty and to the systems that perpetuate the struggle. For this reason, one of the best partnerships working today is between Catholic Charities, our healthcare partners, and the physicians, nurses, and other individuals who volunteer their time to serve in this capacity. As we all know, good health is the greatest treasure of all.
After a long and successful medical career in Chicago, Michael and Lesly Blend retired to Colorado Springs. Though they are relatively new to the Springs, they are deeply immersed in the community as parishioners of Corpus Christi Catholic Church, and generous supporters of Catholic Charities.

Dr. Michael Blend, who was a nuclear medicine physician, has volunteered for two years at the SET Homeless Clinic situated in Catholic Charities’ Marian House. “Most of my patients are very thankful,” says Dr. Blend. “They know that you’re volunteering and this is one of the gifts you receive, that people tend to be very thankful.” He believes it is his duty as a good Catholic to give to those who are less fortunate.

In addition to volunteering their time and services, the Blends have participated in Mariam House Sponsor-A-Day. ‘They have sponsored three days in the last two years and are planning to sponsor another one in the near future. Lesly says, “It is a nice way to honor your family or friends. We don’t do it for the publicity, we do it because we like the idea and want to say ‘thank you.’”
Volunteers donate their time as English as a Second Language instructors, Childbirth and Prenatal Nurturing class teachers, on the St. Patrick’s Day Gala Committee, at the Volunteer Office staff, on the Board of Directors, and so much more. They are the labor force that keeps the agency running. In fiscal year 2015/2016, volunteers donated over 96,000 hours of service valued at over $2.5 million. Catholic Charities could not serve the most vulnerable community members without the support of our volunteers. Thank you for all that you do!
Among the many volunteers at the Marian House Soup Kitchen are several postulants with the Capuchin Franciscans who are contemplating their vocation through service to the poor and vulnerable. They are an order of the Catholic Church formed in the 16th century, dedicated to a life of contemplation, austerity, and service to the poor. The postulants are embarking on at least a five-year process before they profess perpetual vows and join the Capuchins for life.

Father Bill Kraus is the postulant director for the Solanus Casey Friary in Colorado Springs. Each July, he takes postulants under his wing. They live at the friary until May and volunteer at the Marian House on Mondays and Wednesdays. The men – usually young, but not always – work in the kitchen, wash dishes, pack food boxes, and participate in the Homeless Engagement and Response Team (HEART) program. HEART canvases the downtown area several times a week, engaging with people experiencing homelessness, offering assistance and information on available services.

“ать’s been good getting to know the clients and volunteers,” says postulant Collin Brown. “It gives you a different perspective on life. Part of it is seeing how they live, their joys, and struggles in life.”

Fellow postulant Henry Nguyen of Denver agreed: “It’s been swell seeing the uniqueness of each person.”

But both admit they have had to set aside – or at least come to terms with – their own judgments and prejudices. “We had a walk [with the HEART team],” says Brown, “and halfway through I asked myself, ‘Are we really doing anything?’ You see the same people all the time. You originally think you can help fix them.”

Father Kraus says such feelings are normal. “All of us are a mixture of light and darkness. Some of these people try harder than others. At the outset, you can’t let judgment get too much in the way of service. It’s the encounter where you both learn and serve.”

Just seven months into their postulancy, Brown and Nguyen seem to know they face some tough and unknown challenges – and perhaps some unearthly rewards few will know. For now, Brown says, he’s just taking it one day at a time. “You can never be prepared, you just have to fly by the Holy Spirit. Every day is different.”
Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, donors, volunteers, and guests, the 16th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Gala raised $302,000 for the programs of Catholic Charities – an all-time Gala record!

The evening began with friendly, competitive bidding in the Silent Auction followed by a gourmet, Irish-themed meal. Entertainment featured cocktail music from the Colorado Springs Conservatory and a live painting experience by Devin Montagne, who sold his work of art – twice – in the Live Auction. The Live Auction also featured a trip to Mexico - another item that sold twice thanks to the generosity of Bill & Marcie Miller. The Paddle Auction to support Catholic Charities programs featured an anonymous $5,000 matched gift, raising an additional $11,000. The auction closed with 48 bids for a 2006 Pahlmeyer Merlot for the final donor of the evening, extending the auction and raising an additional $4,800! A special thank you to our Master of Ceremonies, Betty Sexton, and Auctioneer, Kevin Patterson! All auctions set revenue records as a result of great donations and generous bidders. Thank you!

This year’s program featured the Hinojosas – a family that overcame homelessness with help from Catholic Charities. They continue to work with the agency on their journey to stability and were recently accepted into our Family Mentor Alliance program. To close out the night, guests danced to the sounds of One More Shot, which has provided live music at the gala for the past 10 years.

Join us next year to celebrate Catholic Charities’ 50th Anniversary at the 17th Annual St. Patrick’s Day Gala on March 17, 2018!
Material Needs:

**Food:** Ground beef, non-dairy coffee creamer, hot chocolate, sugar, salt, non-perishable food items

**Infants & Children:** Size 4 & 5 diapers, parents’ choice baby formula, baby food, new baby clothes

**Home & Transportation:** Dishes, pots & pans, working vehicles, grocery store and gas gift cards

**Clothing:** Coats, hoodies, sweatpants, men’s pants, blankets, men’s/women’s new underwear

Drop donations at the Marian House Dock
14 West Bijou Street
Monday - Saturday, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Volunteer Needs:

Family Day Center, Client Services Navigator, Clothing Closet Volunteers, Family Mentor Alliance Mentors

Call 719-866-6559 to get involved!

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In response to Jesus Christ’s call to affirm the value and dignity of each human life, to build solidarity within the community, and to advocate for justice for the poor and vulnerable, Catholic Charities of Central Colorado humbly engages in the ministry of charity for those in both economic and spiritual poverty so that all – staff, volunteers, and clients – may fully achieve their God-given potential.

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Don’t be fooled by the quality look of this newsletter. We are committed to using our funds in the most cost-efficient way possible so we can forward our work to reduce poverty in our community.

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Success to us is teaching Sarah the skills needed to find a job.

At Catholic Charities, we are more than a soup kitchen - we are here to help people succeed. Success to some people is finding a warm, safe place to get a meal. Or getting help to transition out of homelessness. Or learning the skills needed to get a job and change the direction of their lives. Success to us is making a difference, one life at a time.

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