

THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program / Fall 2011

This issue: A Prescription from the Kitchen p2 / Bank Makes Prosthetic Fingers Possible p3 / Eating with the Squirrels p3 www.bhchp.org

Our Mission: The mission of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) is to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women and children in the greater Boston area.

We Offer: Primary Care, Behavioral Health, Oral Health, Family Services, Case Management, Medical Respite Care, and Outreach



We Are: Physicians, Dentists, Registered Nurses, Social Workers, Building & Maintenance Staff, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Administrative Staff, Psychiatrists, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counselors, Food Services Staff, Case Managers, and Dental Assistants

A HEART ATTACK DELIVERS A MESSAGE THAT'S HARD TO IGNORE: TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY SERIOUSLY OR YOU'RE GOING TO DIE

I'd been taken down the hill to MGH by ambulance from the Dunkin' Donuts on Cambridge Street where the manager noticed I looked bad and offered help. I'm lucky that he was on duty that day and paying attention to this "regular."

Two and a half weeks, two shunts and one pace-maker later, I was "well enough to go home." Except, I didn't have a home. Now what?

I wasn't sure what to expect of a "medical respite facility" for homeless people but there was no doubt that I was too sick to go back on the street or into a shelter but not "acutely sick" enough to stay at MGH.

For 9 weeks in the summer of 2010 Barbara McInnis House became home. A comfortable bed, 3 very good meals each day and, when I was feeling better, activities to occupy my mind and my time. I joined a "writing group" that helped me and other patients to share our stories while we uncovered the truths and fictions in them.

The nurses and doctors not only treated my body, they treated my spirit, showing me a level of respect and concern that invited me back to life. My self-respect had been parked, rusting on the side of the road and I needed this gift of a jump start.

I was doing well in Barbara McInnis House but was afraid my life would fall

apart when I was discharged. A heart attack delivers a message that's hard to ignore: "take this opportunity seriously or you're going to die." So I kept working with my case manager to line up substance abuse treatment and a half-way house after I was discharged where I could protect my sobriety. In "half-way" I pushed for help to locate a roof of my own. I knew that a roof was part of the prescription for both my sobriety and return to health.

I live in public housing now, in Charlestown. I'm still learning to sit with myself... out of harm's way and to work on my recovery...of body and spirit. Sobriety will be a day to day struggle for the rest of my life. I organize my life a bit better

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"The nurses and doctors not only treated my body, they treated my spirit, showing me a level of respect and concern that invited me back to life."

A PRESCRIPTION THAT CAN ONLY COME FROM THE KITCHEN



Top: Dale Donovan in the Kitchen at Barbara McInnis House; Bottom: Dale Donovan and Steve Paquin

“Steve balances his menus with a sensitive regard for our patients’ needs and an enduring respect for your generosity.”

When BHCHP’s Steve Paquin, the Manager of Food Services at our 104-bed medical respite facility, the Barbara McInnis House, plans menus for the week, he is taking on some daunting challenges: 3 well balanced, nutritious meals a day,

- that taste good,
- that offer choice...always important... especially for men and women who may have ignored their own nutrition because they are dealing with another more pressing question, “Where do I sleep tonight,”
- that meet the special dietary needs of heart, diabetic, ulcer and cancer patients,
- that include the patients coming back at irregular times from chemo, CAT scans and day surgeries.

Steve, and the men and women who work so hard with him, are very much a part of the medicine that matters at BHCHP. Their medicine feeds both body and soul.

Like any careful manager, Steve works hard, within the limits of his budget, to maintain high quality and preserve enjoyment. He balances his menus with a sensitive regard for our patients’ needs and an enduring respect for your generosity. He could not do this if he did not partner with **The Greater Boston Food Bank*** and purchase food at reduced costs. With “The Bank’s” help, Steve and his hard working crew make kitchen

magic 7 days a week with balanced choices like these:

- for breakfast – a plain, cinnamon raisin or whole wheat bagel, a choice of fruit yogurt, raisin bran or wheat cereal and an apple or banana,
- for lunch – minestrone or chicken soup, grilled chicken sandwich on a multigrain roll with lettuce and tomato or chicken with beans and rice,
- for dinner – roast beef with brown gravy, boiled Idaho potatoes and green beans or chicken stir fry over rice, chilled/sliced peaches or a piece of fresh fruit.

The patients who can be up and about, go to the dining room for their meals. Those who are recuperating from surgery or chemo stay close to their beds. Several others are receiving end of life care. They are spending their final days in the first home they have known in years. Each of these men and women knows and needs this nourishing and comforting prescription that can come only from the kitchen.

This is one more way in which your generosity is really making a difference. We send our sincere thanks for helping to make Barbara McInnis House feel like home. ■

* The Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB) is the largest hunger-relief organization in New England and among the largest food banks in the country.

A HEART ATTACK...

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Stephanie Barker, RN, taking “vitals” bedside at Barbara McInnis House

than before my heart attack. On Thursdays I return to Barbara McInnis House to help with the “writing group” that I joined as a patient there over a year ago.

I feel ready to work now...to earn an income. I’d love to work with people who, like me, are learning to take responsibility for their lives, even when they don’t feel like it. I’ve got something to teach about that journey and I know that I will be in an environment where I can continue to learn to take care of myself. I’ll take on just about any work while I keep an eye out for this “ideal” job.

Sometimes I think that my heart attack was the beginning when it could have been the end and that Barbara McInnis House was there in the beginning. I never knew Barbara McInnis but know that the nurses and doctors and case managers and building staff who cared for me in that place named for her made a real difference in inviting me back to life. ■

Randy Fisher as told to Tom McCormack

BANK MAKES PROSTHETIC FINGERS POSSIBLE FOR FORMERLY HOMELESS MAN

Because they live in poverty, the men, women and children under BHCHP's care are often forced to forego essential items and services that support their health and wellbeing. Through the generosity of foundations, corporations and individuals BHCHP is able to address these uncovered needs that make such a great difference to health, comfort and self worth: eyeglasses, dentures and orthopedic shoes. In addition to improving the lives of our patients, this support gives our medical providers the security of knowing that the treatment plans they prescribe will not be compromised by their patients' inability to purchase medications and other health-supporting items.

One of our Street Team nurse practitioners recently presented this extraordinary request:

"**Edwin**, a formerly chronically homeless patient followed by our Street Team, has recently found housing, after a

very long battle with mental illness and a variety of physical ailments. A few years ago, when living outside, he suffered from severe frostbite, which required that a portion of two fingers be amputated. This physical impairment, compounded by his mental illness, has been a constant and immense struggle for him. He has set aside money from the small disability benefits he receives in an attempt to save what he needs for prosthesis, but he is unable to come close to the \$3,000 estimated cost for this service."

All of Edwin's caregivers are most grateful to the BNY Mellon Charitable Giving/Alice P. Chase Trust for their generous support of this life affirming request. They have seen how this seemingly small procedure has made a tremendous impact upon his life. Edwin's own words express that gratitude and the essential importance of this gift.

Thank you very much for the money. You are doing me a good favor by giving this money because now I can use my fingers in restaurants and on the bus without being ashamed and this will help make my life complete. Thank you very much.
Edwin ■

"This support gives our medical providers the security of knowing that the treatment plans they prescribe will not be compromised by their patients' inability to purchase medications and other health-supporting items."

EATING WITH THE SQUIRRELS

One wonders how Cynthia Korhonen came by her relaxed grasp...a grasp on the life filling pleasure of giving...a grasp on the imaginative and engaging ways that she exercises her many kindnesses. Giving seems to come quite naturally. Sometimes it is as uncertain as greeting and conversing with the homeless men and women she does **not** pass by on the way to work. Other times it can be a serendipitous conversation with a "regular" on the bus on its morning ride down Mass Avenue.

Eye to eye contact is important to Cynthia. She is not timid. She is ready, respectful and engaging...with everyone.

Bob Taube, BHCHP's executive director, and a "regular" on the bus found this out a little over a year ago when she engaged him in a traveling "Where do you work" conversation. Even before Albany Street, Bob knew that she would become involved with BHCHP. He didn't know, though, how far she would extend her generosity.

Cynthia has become an important part of this organization.

Her work as a volunteer has evolved. It's too easy to say that she is an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher. She is much more than that, individualizing every lesson and carefully fostering the encouragement every student needs. With Hector she instructs through the housing and training forms that he has to complete. With Mauricio she helps him write a short story, *Eating With Squirrels*, about his early life in Colombia. And, because she has the interest and the talent and the desire to show him how well he has done, she honors him with an illustrated copy of this, his first work in English. He will hold this kindness forever.

Filled with an active imagination, Cynthia is now developing a course that will teach English (ESL) through the Beatles: "Everyone knows the Beatles and they know all the words in English." No one here doubts that it will be a wonderful opportunity for all involved. BSL (Beatles as a Second Language) will delight those who study and those who pass through, accidentally on purpose, to catch today's lessons and yesterday's memories.

This woman, so generous with her time, has recently made a quiet decision to give financial assistance to BHCHP. She has named BHCHP as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy, becoming a member of our **Dennis Buff Bequest Society**.* She has willingly but hesitantly allowed us to speak here about this aspect of her generosity. "I'll never be able to make a huge difference, but I can make a real difference to homeless men and women now with my time and I can do that into the future with this gift."

Asked why she is so generous to our organization, her answer is simple. "I'm inspired by Dr. Jim O'Connell. I trust Bob Taube. I see the good work that is done here and I believe in it. This is a very accessible organization. These are good people. It's really that simple." ■

* A charitable bequest is simply a distribution in any amount from your estate to a charitable organization through your last will and testament. More on line at www.BHCHP.org.

If you have a question or would like to know more, without any obligation, please contact Linda O'Connor at 857.654.1050 or loconnor@bhchp.org.

IMPROVED TREATMENT...

continued from back page

June 2011

This initiative is being designed to improve the medical outcomes for these patients and to lower the cost of treating them by identifying them for fast track admissions to our Barbara McInnis House (medical respite care). At Barbara McInnis house, they will receive intensive case management intervention, including behavioral health assessment, addiction services and housing evaluation.

Comment: Because many of these patients struggle with mental illness and addiction as well as chronic homelessness, re-orienting their treatment by breaking this cycle of high ED use could be extremely important for their health outcomes. At the same time, it will help to manage the cost expended by the medical system at large.

July 2011

Piloting of our new model of care for these patients has begun. A BHCHP nurse is rounding at Tufts Medical Center two days each week.

Comment: The goal is to identify and interact with patients and their caregivers in the ED and on the hospital floors, to develop rapport with Tufts personnel and to assist Tufts staff in accessing BHCHP's respite care facility (and primary care clinics) as an alternative to ED use.

September 2011

BHCHP has met with all of the 4 EDs and is developing plans that are nuanced to address the differences in each hospital. A full time case-manager as well as significant psychiatry time are being directed toward this group of patients while they are at Barbara McInnis House.

Comment: Still in the early days, we are beginning to see positive outcomes for both patients and hospitals as the bridge is built between our patient's sicknesses, each hospital ED's process and our program's targeted resources.

You make this initiative possible. It holds promise of improved outcomes for patients who require closer care management and, at the same time, assists 4 key Boston hospitals in containing the costs by accessing BHCHP's targeted services.

You are making a very real difference with your support...helping to limit pain while extending the reach of valuable but limited dollars. Thank you. ■



Dr. Jim O'Connell at BHCHP's Barbara McInnis House

Donate

You can make a big difference in the health and comfort of a homeless man, woman or child with a small gift. You can't imagine how much these items help our caregivers to establish and maintain contact and you can't imagine how much our patients appreciate your kindness.

We can never have too many of these items:

- new white socks
- new underwear (men's and women's)
- new sneakers
- new flip flops
- diapers
- gift cards:
 - CVS (\$5 and up)
 - McDonald's (\$5 and up)
 - Dunkin' Donuts (\$5 and up)
 - Target (\$5 and up)
 - Stop & Shop (\$20 and up)

Why Socks? Access to socks is often limited for homeless men and women living in shelters and on the streets. Common infections such as athlete's foot thrive when damp socks are worn for days at a time. Frostbite is common in colder months, sometimes resulting in toe amputations. The best way to prevent such conditions is to keep feet clean and dry – very difficult if you spend your days outside. That's why BHCHP has a daily foot clinic at St. Francis House and regularly scheduled foot clinics at other primary care sites. Contact volunteer@bhchp.org or call Carrie Eldridge-Dickson at 857.654.1048 for more information, to find out about other "Small Gift" needs or to make arrangements for delivery. ■

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*** A partial list of BHCHP's partners**

includes: Above & Beyond/Brookview, Anchor Inn, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Boston Family Shelter, Boston Living Center, Boston Medical Center, Bridge to Recovery, Brookview House, Cardinal Medeiros Center, Carolina Hills Shelter, Casa Esperanza, Casa Nueva Vida, Church of the Advent, Crittenton Women's Union, Crossroads, DOVE, Entre Familia, Families in Transition, Father Bill's & Mainspring, Finex House, Hildebrand Family Shelter, hopeFound, Horizons for Homeless Children, Housing Families, Inc., Joelyn's Family Home, Kingston House, Latinas & Ninos, Lindemann Center, Long Island Shelter, Margaret's House, Mass General Hospital, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Millenium House, Nazareth Residence, New England Center for Homeless Veterans, Paul Sullivan Housing, Pilgrim Shelter, Pine Street Inn, Portis Family House, Project Hope, Queen of Peace Shelter, Renewal House, Revision House, Rosie's Place, Safe Harbor, Project SOAR, Sojourner House, South End Community Health Center, St. Francis House, St. Mary's Women's & Infant Center, St. Ambrose, The Eighth Pole at Suffolk Downs, Women's Lunch Place, Woods-Mullen Shelter

Founded in 1985, BHCHP employs the professional medical staff that **manages** the clinics and **delivers** the comprehensive health care at most of greater Boston's adult, family and domestic violence shelters (Pine Street Inn, The New England Center for Homeless Veterans, St. Francis House and more than 80 others).* BHCHP is the hands and face of health care for over 11,000 homeless adults and children each year at sites as diverse as Horizons for Homeless Children and the crawl space under the Longfellow Bridge. BHCHP has operated in-the-black while delivering medicine that matters to Boston's most vulnerable population for over 26 years.

In addition, BHCHP staffs, manages and delivers comprehensive health care at 2 hospital-based clinics on the campuses of Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Medical Center and at a clinic on the backstretch at Suffolk Downs Racetrack. BHCHP also staffs, manages and operates our own Barbara McInnis House at Jean Yawkey Place, a 104-bed medical respite facility for homeless adults with complex conditions like cancer, heart disease, pneumonia and diabetes who are too sick to live in

a shelter or on the street and would otherwise require prolonged and costly hospitalization in the acute care rooms of Boston's hospitals.

When you support BHCHP you reach children and adults throughout greater Boston's entire safety net community when they are not only homeless but also sick. ■

“When you support BHCHP you reach children and adults throughout greater Boston's entire safety net community when they are not only homeless but also sick.”

News

► **Grand Slam for Red Sox Nation and Sox for Socks at Fenway Park on July 9th and 10th!** With the support of The Red Sox Foundation and NESN thousands of fans brought new white socks to our collection stations at Fenway this year.

The Sox for Socks events netted 13,000 pairs of socks and \$1,800, bringing our six-year total to more than 80,000 pairs and \$9,000.

Our patients and caregivers send their sincere thanks to all for this remarkable support which will have such a positive impact on the lives of our patients!



Red Sox President and CEO, Larry Lucchino, with volunteers at Sox for Socks game on July 9

► **Melanie Wolfgang**, a HUD Presidential Fellow with a special interest in housing and health (and HIV), is spending four months of her two year fellowship at BHCHP. We are pleased and honored to be the not-for-profit organization selected for Melanie's rotation and look forward to the opportunity to engage with her throughout our organization.

► **Cheryl Kane, RN**, received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Saint Anselm College at the college's annual commencement exercises on May 21. No surprise to all who know her, Cheryl was introduced to the graduating class and their guests with these words: "Mother Teresa once said, 'It is not how much you do but how much love you put into the doing.' She could have been speaking about Cheryl Kane."

YOUR SUPPORT WILL BRING...

the **Dignity** of dentures for a 42-year-old man who had forgotten what a difference a smile can make.

the **Trust** that a therapist can bring to a deeply depressed 46-year-old man who cries at each of his medical visits to our Pine Street Inn clinic.

the **Hope** of a respite bed at Barbara McInnis house for a 56 year-old woman experiencing the pain of chronic arthritis and the exhausting side effects of the only medicine that will keep her out of a wheel chair.

the **Healing** comfort of a family physician's visit to a mother and her 2 children coping with their transition into homelessness.

[Donate Now](#) www.bhchp.org

MEDICINE THAT MATTERS



A park bench becomes a clinic office for this diabetic's blood sugar test.

IMPROVED TREATMENT FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE THAT LOWERS COST. IS IT POSSIBLE?

A message from BHCHP's Executive Director, Bob Taube, PhD, MPH and President, Jim O'Connell, MD

Greater Boston's most vulnerable patients, the chronically homeless, are often its sickest and most complex to treat. Our responsibility to them obligates us to deliver medicine that matters because it manages and improves their health care. At the same time, we strive to be careful stewards of the financial resources that have been committed to our work. In that dual role of caregiver and steward we want to share these notes about an important new initiative. Your generosity is helping to support it.

May 2011

BHCHP begins meeting with the Emergency Departments (ED) of our four major hospital partners: Boston Medical Center, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital and Tufts Medical Center.

Comment: Our goal is to intervene in the cycle of Emergency Department utilization and hospitalization of our patients who use EDs the most.

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