



Summer 2015

THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

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, Substance Use Disorders Services, Medical Respite Care, and Outreach

We Are: Administrative Staff, Building & Maintenance Staff, Case Managers, Dental Assistants, Dentists, Food Services Staff, Behavioral Health & Substance Abuse Counselors, Community Health Workers, Benefits Enrollment Specialists, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians, Physician Assistants, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Registered Nurses, Social Workers, Respite Aides, AmeriCorps/Community HealthCorps Members

The View From the Bridge is a publication of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, bridging the gap between homelessness and health 24/7/365. For additional information please contact: Carrie Eldridge-Dickson, Manager of Leadership Giving & Communications, (celdridge-dickson@bhchp.org) at 857.654.1048 or Catie Colliton, Donor Relations & Communications Coordinator, (ccolliton@bhchp.org) at 857.654.1044.

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Read our patient stories and learn how to get involved at www.bhchp.org



30 Years of Medicine That Matters

A message from Chief Executive Officer, Barry Bock, and President, Dr. Jim O'Connell



Cheryl Kane, RN, checks on the health and wellbeing of a patient living under a bridge as part of her Street Team rounds circa 2007. Cheryl is now the Director of Nursing at our Barbara McInnis House.

In 30 years of caring for Boston's homeless population, we have seen incredible acts of kindness from so many—not only from our caregivers, but also our patients, from our partners and local community leaders, and especially from you, our supporters.

Whether you've begun giving to BHCHP recently or you've been making a yearly gift since our early days, you are making a meaningful difference in the lives of the city's most vulnerable population every day by choosing to support BHCHP.

Our mission is simple: to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women, and children in the greater

Boston area. We are doctors, nurses, case managers—and so many more—addressing a great need by making connections with those who have lost everything.

In 30 years of caring for Boston's homeless population, we have seen incredible acts of kindness from so many...

Over the last three decades, we have continuously adapted to meet the needs of our ever-growing patient population. We have also established innovative new approaches in response to the complicated health issues our patients present. From reaching individuals on the streets and families in hotel rooms to providing care within emergency shelters and hospitals, we meet our patients where they are and offer healing and hope.

Thank you for being there by our side to support the work we do to help those most in need. You make it possible to continue creating innovative and life-changing programs. ■

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Team McInnis gets pumped up before an early morning run with Billie Starks, clinical social worker and BOMF coordinator (bottom left).

Patients Run to Get Back on Their Feet

If you walk by Jean Yawkey Place at 6:30am on a Friday, you're likely to catch a group of about 15 homeless men and women, volunteers and staff, and sometimes even our CEO gathering in a circle, cheering, then taking off into the South End. Rain or shine, this team meets three days a week to walk or run as part of the BHCHP's "Team McInnis" Back on My Feet chapter.

After seeing chapters popping up at our partner sites, Billie Starks, a clinical social worker at BHCHP, launched a group for our patients in August of 2014. BOMF is a national organization with chapters throughout the U.S. aiming to help homeless people transform their lives and gain confidence to achieve their goals through running, but it has done so much more.

Since its inception at BHCHP, the group has created a sense of community, wellbeing, and overall health among its members. Patients and their health care providers were thrilled to see significant strides in the runners' weight loss, lower blood sugar, and reduced blood pressure. Billie plans to grow the team, as well as collect data on the runners' health and wellness by establishing a Quality Improvement Project with our Research Institute.

Billie, an avid runner herself, has run the Boston Marathon with Team BHCHP for the past three years. We are so grateful to [our 2015 marathon team](#): Lincoln Taggart, Sonia Groff, and Kennedy Arroyo, who raised \$21,000 to benefit BHCHP, with their bibs generously donated by John Hancock. ■

Emerging Leaders

BHCHP is seeking individuals who share our commitment to caring for Boston's most vulnerable men, women and children to join our [Emerging Leaders](#) board or ambassador network. This dynamic group is charged with building and strengthening the community of young professionals who support BHCHP by raising critical funds to further our work, raising awareness of our services and the need, and contributing directly to the cause through volunteerism and service.

Emerging Leaders members must possess a passion for BHCHP's mission, an authentic compassion for our patients, and a willingness to learn about the health care we provide.

For more information or to apply, contact Alyssa Brassil at abrassil@bhchp.org or 857.654.1046.

BHCHP partners with Bridge Over Troubled Waters

"Every patient is urgent," says Karen Friedman, a BHCHP nurse practitioner, when referring to the vulnerable homeless youth she cares for in partnership with Bridge Over Troubled Waters. "It's important to be present and meet someone exactly where they are at."

Committed to transforming the lives of runaway, homeless, and high-risk youth, Bridge is a Boston-based organization providing transitional housing, day programs, GED classes, counseling, medical care, and more for homeless people between the ages of 14 and 24.

"It's important to be present and meet someone exactly where they are at."

"A lot of these young people are on the fringe of things and don't trust the systems or services," says Karen. Homeless youths are incredibly vulnerable, often having a great sense of distrust while grappling with serious issues—such as family violence, pregnancy, or aging out of foster care—and struggling to find shelter, food, and safety. Consequently, there is a disconnect from care that causes treatable illnesses to go undetected and preventive services to be neglected, which can quickly lead to health crises and long-term complications. Now, Karen and David Reyes, a Health

Educator, will be able to offer the youth at Bridge consistent care from trusted and familiar providers.

As part of BHCHP's partnership with Bridge, Karen has been providing medical care to her young patients at their downtown clinic every Thursday since January. She also accompanies David, who specializes in HIV testing and counseling, on the Bridge outreach van twice a month.

Not only are Karen and David providing vital services, but they are also collaborating with outreach workers to help these young people navigate the health care system. Whether they're treating an infection, offering a behavioral health specialist referral, or helping fill a prescription, this team of dedicated providers is determined to help these vulnerable young people get back on their feet. "The need is great," says Karen. "We are being put to good use." ■



Karen Friedman, NP, (left) and David Reyes, Health Educator, (right) offer young patients easy access to health care at the BOTW clinic.

BHCHP STAFF UPDATES

❖ **Cheryl Kane, RN** and Director of Nursing at our Barbara McInnis House, was named *Woman of the Year* in December at *Friends for Children*, the annual fundraising effort of the Sheet Metal Workers Union recognizing individuals' dedication to helping children.

❖ On January 20th, **James Apt**, a case manager with our HIV Team, was honored with *The Caring Force's* Member Spotlight for his commitment, compassion and ability to connect with those in need.

❖ Our Chief Medical Officer, **Dr. Monica Bharel**, was named Massachusetts' Commissioner of Public Health by Governor Charlie Baker in February. Since then, **Dr. Jessie Gaeta** has been named our new Chief Medical Officer and **Dr. Denise De Las Nueces** has assumed the role of Medical Director.

❖ **Dr. Monica Bharel's** first-person narrative on BHCHP, "Doctoring for the Homeless: Caring for the Most Vulnerable by Building Trust," was published in the *American Medical Association's Journal of Ethics* in May. You can view the article here: bit.ly/AMABharel.

30 Years Later: Dennis Buff Bequest Society Donor Connects at JYP



Dr. Rebecca Folkert

This past February, longtime BHCHP supporter, Dr. Rebecca Folkert, took her first tour of Jean Yawkey Place—but she had been to 780

Albany Street before. Her first visit was in 1985 as a Pathology Resident when the same building was the esteemed Mallory Institute of Pathology.

Now the Chief of Neuropathology at Brigham and Women's Hospital, an oncology pathologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, a consultant at Boston Children's Hospital, and a volunteer pathology teacher in Rwanda, Rebecca finds herself compelled to give back. "Being able to care for someone without a home is one of the most generous things you could do," she says, which is why she decided to join the [Dennis Buff Bequest Society](#) in 2012 by leaving a gift to BHCHP in her will. "It's a privilege to be able to help."

After hearing touching stories from family friends who had been BHCHP staff and spending time caring for someone on the border of

homelessness, Rebecca decided to get involved with BHCHP in 2005. "Home means shelter, but also the body is our home. So when you are homeless and ill, the internal and external home is compromised."

"Home means shelter, but also the body is our home. So when you are homeless and ill, the internal and external home is compromised."

On her recent tour of our multi-disciplinary facility that houses an outpatient clinic, a dental clinic, the Barbara McInnis House, and our renovated historic lobby, Rebecca reflected: "The scope is so wide...much more than I imagined from reading the newsletter. It reinforced my feeling that this is an amazing place and worthwhile program. Really one of a kind."

To learn more about the Dennis Buff Bequest Society and other planned giving options, please contact Linda Wood O'Connor at 857.654.1050 or loconnor@bhchp.org. ■

BHCHP RN Aided Ebola Treatment in Liberia



Sandy Sheble-Hall, RN, (far right) with his fellow volunteers from Partners in Health were stationed at an Ebola Treatment Unit (ETU) in Liberia.

When HIV/AIDS was rampant in the 1990s, tens of thousands of people worldwide were dying from the disease. Sandy Sheble-Hall was a sheep farmer at the time, but he felt a call to "be part

of the solution instead of the problem," so he went back to school for nursing. Today, Sandy is a RN on BHCHP's HIV Team. It wasn't a surprise to him or those who know him that he felt a call to help countries devastated by Ebola. "I didn't have a choice. I was compelled to do it. The opportunity to help stop Ebola was too much to ignore," says Sandy.

After taking a CDC training course and getting his affairs in order, Sandy headed off to Liberia in October of 2014 with five other nurses and one doctor as part of a Partners in Health aid group. Sandy's group spent the first

half of their 8 week trip thoroughly suited up and sterilized, doing their best to treat patients' symptoms and ease their care in the Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs). The second half of his trip was spent visiting rural villages to offer education on safe practices for sanitation and burials. In the two months he spent in Liberia, he saw the recovery rate jump from 30% to 50%.

"It was an honor and a privilege to be able to go and be a part of that effort," Sandy says. With the help of coworkers at BHCHP donating their vacation time, he was able to take a three month leave of absence from his work here. "I had a lot of people back home pulling for me and that meant a lot." ■

BHCHP responds...

continued from back page

In January, we re-opened the Boston Night Center after it had been closed for five years. The program—which is run by Bay Cove Human Services and funded through BHCHP—is located in downtown Boston near Government Center and is open from 8:30pm to 6:30am, seven days per week. Our Street Team provides on-site medical care, as well. During this winter's cold weather, with temperatures dropping below 0°F, up to 87 people on any given night took shelter at the Night Center.

While the opening of the Night Center fills a necessary role in the sheltering of men and women displaced by the bridge closure, it is also an important step toward offering safe refuge to those homeless men and women who can't handle the large shelters for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Bock added, "The re-opening of the Night Center [has] closed this gap in services and will give shelter and support to some of our neediest citizens of our Commonwealth." BHCHP has made a commitment to fund the Night Center through August, at which point we will evaluate the need and our ability to continue its funding. While this is expected to be a financial strain on our program, we have been fortunate to receive significant support from a small group of committed donors to help fund this effort.

In a statement made during the winter, Mr. Bock and Dr. Jim O'Connell said, "Ultimately we want more affordable housing and not more shelter beds, but until that time comes, we have a responsibility to advocate for these fundamental services. We are delighted to have the Night Center open as a resource for our most vulnerable folks."

In addition to the work BHCHP has done to provide shelter and medical aid for those displaced by the closing of the Long Island bridge, we continued to care for our 12,000+ homeless patients throughout greater Boston who struggle with the challenges of homelessness. This past winter was especially difficult for our patients, who are particularly vulnerable to frigid temperatures and frequent snowstorms.

Our case managers handed out hats, gloves, wool socks, and winter coats, generously supplied by our thoughtful donors. Our clinics provided patients with flu shots and careful monitoring for signs of frostbite. **In fact, during such a fiercely cold and snowy winter, we are relieved to report that there were no deaths due to exposure.** As the weather grows ever warmer, our staff will distribute sunscreen and baseball hats, as they are available, and clinicians will be on the lookout for harmful sunburns and dangerous heat exhaustion.

With the opening of the city's new shelter on Southampton Street, BHCHP will continue to meet the health care needs of the homeless community by expanding our clinical services to this new location. It is our donors who allow us to respond so nimbly and fully, especially at times like this, and we thank you for your thoughtful financial contributions, holiday gifts for patients, and collection drives for much needed supplies. ■

YOUR SUPPORT WILL BRING...

- ❖ the **Healing** comfort of a respite bed for a woman with severe skin abscesses with no other place to recuperate.
- ❖ the **Dignity** of a talking glucometer for a young man who is newly blind and wishes to independently manage his diabetes.
- ❖ the **Trust** developed between a nurse practitioner and her patients who attend the weekly Transgender clinic for primary care and behavioral health services.
- ❖ the **Hope** that a Community Support Worker can instill in a patient who is struggling with addiction, but seeking treatment at a local methadone clinic.

Donate now at

WWW.BHCHP.ORG

You're Invited: Join Us for a Tour

Nothing provides a clearer picture than seeing what we do firsthand. If you have yet to visit our South End location or if you know someone who might be interested in learning about our work, please consider coming down for a small group tour on one of the dates below:

Friday, August 14 at 8 am

Monday, August 24 at 4 pm

Wednesday, September 2 at 12 pm

Please RSVP for one of these tour dates by contacting Carrie Eldridge-Dickson at celdridge-dickson@bhchp.org or 857.654.1048.

If these dates do not work for you, we will happily [schedule a visit](#) for another time. ■

Stories from the Shadows: Reflections of a Street Doctor



We are proud to share that Dr. Jim O'Connell has recently published a collection of stories and essays, written during thirty years of caring for homeless persons in

Boston. The touching pieces in *Stories from the Shadows* gently illuminate the humanity and raw courage of those who struggle to survive and find meaning and hope while living on the streets.

In his foreword, Dr. Howard Koh writes, "You hold in your hands a precious gem. The riveting stories presented here capture each life in such moving and vivid detail that you will be forever changed." We hope that you, too, will be moved by these stories shared from Dr. O'Connell's birds-eye view.

For more information or to order a copy, please visit our website: bit.ly/StoriesShadows ■

OUR STORY



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 60 others). BHCHP is the hands and face of health care for over 12,000 homeless adults and children each year at sites as diverse as Crittenton Women's Union 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 30 years.

YOU CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE WITH A SMALL GIFT

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)
- diapers
- sneakers
- baseball hats
- flip flops
- sunscreen
- gift cards:
 - CVS
 - Dunkin' Donuts
 - McDonald's
 - Stop & Shop

Contact Catie Colliton at 857.654.1044 or ccolliton@bhchp.org to find out about other "Small Gift" needs or to make arrangements for delivery.

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.



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 Alyssa Brassil at 857.654.1046 or abrassil@bhchp.org for more information on coordinating a sock drive in your community.

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BHCHP transformed the atrium at Jean Yawkey Place into an emergency shelter for 45 women after the closing of the Long Island bridge, which displaced over 700 homeless men and women from the island's programs.

BHCHP responds to the Long Island bridge closing and the long, cold winter

Since the closing of the Long Island bridge in October 2014, hundreds of homeless people have been displaced and no longer have the stability that the shelters and treatment programs on the island provided.

"I have done this work for almost 30 years and have never felt so sad and desperate around the need for such basic services as I have around the bridge closing," CEO Barry Bock said last fall.

COO Pooja Bhalla is especially concerned over the loss of 57% of the city's substance abuse treatment beds, which were housed on Long Island. With the number of opioid-related overdose deaths doubling over the last decade, Boston is in desperate need of addiction treatment program beds.

In the face of this crisis, BHCHP offered an immediate and multi-faceted response, always keeping patients at the center of its decisions. Since October, we have been providing emergency shelter for 45 women each night in our atrium at Jean Yawkey Place, as well as offering clinical services to this group two nights per week. In the days following the bridge closure, our staff quickly established a medical clinic at the Boston Public Health Commission's South End Fitness Center that has been sheltering 250 men displaced from the island. We also doubled the hours of our clinic at Woods Mullen Shelter.

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