



CHECKUp

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

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A RETROSPECTIVE

Director Maribeth Woodford to retire in June

In early 2011, Maribeth Woodford joined the Chippewa Valley Free Clinic as the Executive Director. She brought with her a wealth of experience in non-profit management and fundraising, having worked with Fortune 500 CEOs in Minnesota and volunteer leadership and boards for 28 years. She also had a clear vision of how the Clinic could grow and expand its services and a goal of raising awareness of the Clinic in the community. After five locations, 10,000 patients, a worldwide pandemic, 55,806 patient visits, and raising millions of dollars to ensure continuity of care for patients well into the future, Maribeth is retiring in June. Here, she reflects on all of the changes of the last 13 years.



It's with sincere gratitude and humility that I reflect on my career with the Free Clinic. In March of 2011, I enthusiastically entered the doors of the Clinic, starting what I anticipated would be the end of "career" job for a few short years, easing into retirement after a frenetic pace and 60-hour work weeks as state vice president in Minnesota for a large health organization. Thirteen years later, I reluctantly realize that it is now time to move on, knowing I truly have worked at one of the most purposeful organizations in the area, and I am honored to have been part of this joyful work with the most compassionate group of individuals.

We have experienced and made many changes and adjustments throughout my tenure. After 15 years and just a short time after my arrival, the Clinic was informed that ValleyBrook Church had outgrown its current space, and we would need to relocate. It was also discovered we were operating in a financial deficit. Charter Bank took a leap of faith with us, giving the Clinic a generous loan to continue, and with that, several board members and I developed a plan to engage area businesses and health systems to support the Clinic on an ongoing basis. And boy, did many of them step up to the request! The Business Partner program was launched, and the Clinic was soon financially stable, ensuring continuous care for patients beyond a few weeks at a time.

Although we were sad to leave our home of 15 years, we found new space on Richard Drive in Eau Claire, began offering a daytime clinic for

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Since 1997 we've saved lives through 55,806 patient visits. This wouldn't be possible without you!

RETROSPECTIVE (CONTINUED...)

walk-ins on the first and third Thursdays of the month, and started exploring the possibility of adding dental services. At this time, the Chippewa Valley Free Clinic offered five core on-site services: a basic and acute care clinic, chronic disease treatment, a mental health clinic, a medication refill program, and a vision care clinic with free eyeglass vouchers. An oral health/dental program would be implemented later that year but on a very small scale.

In February 2016, the space on Richard Drive was no longer available, and by September, the Clinic had relocated to Porter Avenue, with Syverson Nursing Home providing space on a wing of the Home. We could not have foreseen that less than two years later, the Syverson Building would be sold, and we would begin another search for a new location we could call home for years to come. The Clinic's Board of Directors made the decision to invest in the Clinic's future by purchasing a building that would give us a permanent location and the opportunity to provide more comprehensive services.

After unexpectedly moving three times in the last six years, in November 2018, our current location at 1030 Oak Ridge Drive became our new "forever" medical home. We kicked off a capital campaign to pay for the new building and support continued day-to-day operations providing health care to our patients without missing a day of service. With a goal of \$1.1 million, thanks to tremendous community support, our mortgage was completely paid, and the Clinic was debt-free of the loan. During that time, the Clinic also developed its fully operational dental clinic and initiated the Healthier You wellness program and the Sharing Dignity program, providing free hygiene products and new undergarments to women in need.



And then COVID hit.

Like so many other organizations, all of us at the Clinic were forced to rethink the way we did everything and find new ways to provide health services to those in need. Over sixty volunteers, most of them retirees, were asked to step away from their positions for their own health and safety. Dr. Lori Whitis, the Clinic's Medical Director, was asked to take the lead in stabilizing our facility, working closely with the health department on protocols, serving on COVID committees, and developing safety algorithms and guidelines. The Clinic implemented telehealth appointments and "ask a nurse" call-in service and began mailing medication refills to patient's homes. We put up barriers and safety panels, increased sterilization and sanitation, masked up, and continued on. As COVID wore on, the Clinic became a vaccination site for the health department and was forced to hire limited-term employees, when volunteers, still wary of COVID-19, were slow to return.

We were commended by other health facilities for being nimble, forward-thinking in our planning, and having the ability to stay focused on patient care during this heartbreaking, unthinkable episode in our lives. The staff and volunteers who worked continuously through this pandemic with some fear, yes, but mostly with positive energy to carry on, because they knew if not them, then what? I will always have a great amount of respect for them and carry a special place in my memories of them.

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Through a generous grant from Coach Greg Gard and his family foundation, and the Karen Woodward legacy we were able to focus on preventative services. In 2022, a women's health clinic, focusing on breast and cervical cancer screening, and a colon cancer screening program, were added. Just last year, we increased our outreach on routine adult vaccinations with a grant to hire a vaccine educator and expanded our dental services by collaborating with CVTC's dental program, receiving a substantial 3-year grant from the Department of Human Services, and hiring a part-time dentist and other dental staff.

As I reflect on my time here at the Clinic, I am overwhelmed with feelings of pride and gratitude. I am so proud of everything that has been accomplished in the last 13 years. I remain in awe and with great respect for the founders and initial investors. I'm deeply grateful for the staff and the many volunteers and community members who have stepped forward to ensure that all people, regardless of their financial situation, have access to health care. The Chippewa Valley area cares about its underserved, vulnerable population, and I am so very honored to be part of the programs and services that are part of the solution to offer a hand-up to those in need.

And finally let me thank you, our donors, many times over. None of the patient services, programs, staffing, or medical home would be possible without you. You made my job "easier", and you made our patients' lives better. Thank you.

As I begin the next chapter of my life, I leave knowing that the mission of the Free Clinic, to provide quality health care for individuals of the Chippewa Valley who have no reasonable alternative, will continue thrive today and well into the future, as long as there is a need. And, of course, I am excited about exploring volunteer opportunities that are available to the "retirement" group!

Wishing you good health and well-being,

Maribeth Woodward



faces OF THE CLINIC

CVFC was able to help my aunt with a referral to a surgeon who did the work pro bono. They also set her up with inhalers for her asthma/COPD and anxiety medication. Seriously, this place is so wonderful, and I cannot tell you how grateful I am for the amazing care she has gotten there. It has taken a huge worry off my shoulders!

- Raechel

GRANT AREA UPDATES

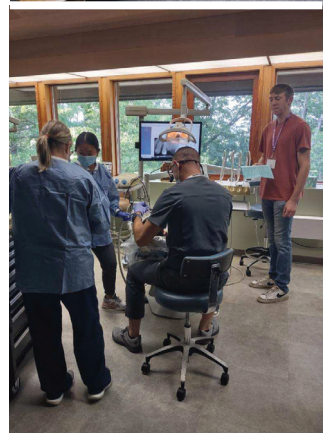
PHYSICAL THERAPY - Last summer, our physical therapy services began, funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Eau Claire, Dunn, and Pepin Medical Society Fund of the Eau Claire Community Foundation (ECCF). After some basic remodeling, one of our lower-level suites became home to our physical therapy services. In partnership with Darrin Schober at Optimum Therapies, we have been able to provide 50 physical therapy visits for 18 unique patients, with many more scheduled each month. Optimum has also generously provided essential equipment, including a therapy table and an exercise bike. We are grateful for the generosity of ECCF, Optimum, and the volunteer physical therapists who are helping our patients receive comprehensive care at no cost to them.

VACCINATIONS - Our vaccine outreach program has continued for the 2023-24 year, thanks to a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. In October, we hired Katelyn McClellan as the Vaccine Education Coordinator for this program with a focus on updating adult immunizations. She has been working closely with CVFC Board President Lisa Schiller on rural outreach, visiting area farms to provide education on vaccines and interpreter services.

In addition to the rural outreach initiative, we have been focused on increasing vaccine education and immunizations here at the Clinic, adding COVID-19 to our available vaccines. From October - January, we have provided nearly 300 vaccinations to over 100 unique individuals.

DENTAL - CVFC received a very generous DHS grant for our dental program, allowing us to hire a part-time dentist, hygienist, and a youth apprentice dental assistant. These hires allowed us to add a Thursday evening dental clinic in hopes of doubling the number of patients served over the year. As of January, we have seen 89 unique dental patients over 170 visits - which is incredible, given that we had 230 total visits for all of 2022-23, and we still have 5 months left of the clinic year.

GENERAL DHS GRANT - Our patient services grant with DHS has given us the opportunity to hire a Nurse Practitioner for Thursday-day clinics. This hire allowed us to extend our Thursday hours until 2pm and gave us the capability to treat additional patients. Since joining our staff at the very end of 2023, Stacie Zais, FNP, has already made an impact, with dozens of patient visits already this year.



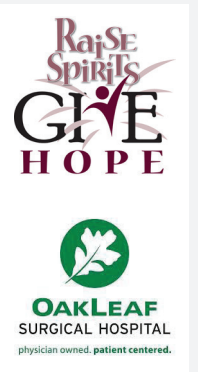
OUR POPULAR FUNDRAISER RETURNS...IN PERSON!

Raise Spirits, Give Hope

During the past three years, changes were needed to make our signature fundraising event, "Raise Spirits, Give Hope," a safe, responsible, and beneficial event for the Clinic. Our solution was the pandemic-friendly "Raise Spirits, Give Hope...in a Box," where community members had the opportunity to support the Free Clinic by ordering a themed box filled with food and beverages to enjoy at home.

This year, we're returning to our popular in-person event. We are very pleased to announce that Raise Spirits, Give Hope 2024, presented by OakLeaf Surgical Hospital, will be held on Thursday, May 30, at 5:30 pm, at 2 Roots Gallery & Wine Bar in downtown Eau Claire. The VIP cocktail party-inspired event will feature 2 Roots' signature wine dispensers, heavy hors d'oeuvres, live music, a silent auction, and a short program celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Chippewa Valley Free Clinic and the retirement of our Executive Director, Maribeth Woodford. A very limited number of tickets will be available beginning in early April.

The Raise Spirits, Give Hope fundraiser generates community funding for the Clinic's health and dental services and free medications, creates community awareness, and introduces new donors to the clinic. With the closing of HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital, and the Prevea clinics, the need for health care services in our community is greater than ever. We remain committed to providing compassionate care to our vulnerable populations. Follow us on Facebook at @chippewavalleyfreeclinic for all the latest updates!



FAREWELL GOOD FRIENDS

CVFC is deeply saddened and very concerned about the closing of HSHS Sacred Heart, St. Joseph's Hospital, and the Prevea clinics in western Wisconsin, a decision that will have a deep and long-lasting impact on our communities.

During CVFC's 26-year history, HSHS Sacred Heart has been a generous collaborator, working in partnership to provide comprehensive care to patients who are uninsured or underinsured. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to work closely with those who have volunteered their time and talents at the Clinic. With the generous support of our local health systems and the community at large, we remain committed to providing compassionate care to our vulnerable populations. In the end, however, what matters most are the people. Our hearts go out to the 1,400 employees and countless patients who are impacted by the closures.

WELCOME NEW STAFF



STACIE
Nurse Practitioner

I am excited to be joining CVFC to help meet the healthcare needs of our underserved population. I live in Elk Mound with my husband and two of our three children. My passion over the past 8 yrs. has been going on 2-3 mission trips to Honduras yearly. In my free time, I enjoy being at our cabin on the lake, boating, reading, and spending time with family.



KATELYN
Vaccine Education Coord. (LTE)

I am majoring in Nursing with a minor in Spanish at UWEC, in hopes of becoming a registered nurse and possibly a certified translator. I came to the Chippewa Valley Free Clinic because I was passionate about adults staying updated on their vaccines to protect them and everyone around them.



RACHEL
Interpreter and Patient Liaison

I am originally from North Central Wisconsin but have lived in Eau Claire for many years now. I have spent most of my life volunteering here in WI and in Ecuador, South America where I was able to learn Spanish which enables me to do that much more to contribute to the welfare of the people in my community.



KIM
Dental Hygienist (LTE)

I've volunteered as a dental hygienist at free clinics throughout my career. I've also worked on the Ronald McDonald dental mobile as a fill-in dental assistant. I feel very fortunate for the opportunity to use my dental hygiene skills and knowledge to give back to the community I live in. Being part of preventative health care is something I am enthusiastic about.



NORMA
Youth Apprentice (LTE)

I'm currently a student at Memorial High School and I have a youth apprenticeship as a Dental Assistant through CVFC. I enjoy working with the community and gaining experience with dental professionals. When I'm not working or doing schoolwork, I'll always have my nose in a book!



STEPHEN
Dentist (LTE)

My family and I moved to Eau Claire four years ago and have been loving it! I previously volunteered at the Good Samaritan Dental Clinic. I was glad when I found the CVFC so I could continue to give back to our local community. Outside of work, you can usually find me either on the ski slopes or out in the woods with some or all of our four little kids!

Maribeth Woodford
Executive Director

Lori Whitis, MD
Volunteer Medical Director

Ali Hamblin
Office Manager

Robin Kranig, RN, MSN
Director of Clinic Services

Rhea Crawford
Director of Dental Services

Ken Adler, MD
Dispensary Manager

Darla Eilen
Case Manager/ Volunteer Manager

Dorothy Nelson
Fiscal Manager

Pat Schachtner, RN
Clinic Assistant

Jackie Sanchez
Hispanic Case Manager

Sean Tarpensing, DDS
Volunteer Dental Director

Madi Thalacker
Reception Manager

Stacie Zais, FNP
Nurse Practitioner

Rachel Fettes
Interpreter

Katelyn McClellan
Vaccine Education Coordinator

Kim Truog
Dental Hygienist

Norma Esparza
Youth Dental Apprentice

Stephen Welna, DDS
Dentist



CHIPPEWA VALLEY
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WHY WE LOVE VOLUNTEERING

I volunteer at the Free Clinic because I am able to use my knowledge and skills to help the people who need it the most. At the Free Clinic, we are able to manage people’s health skillfully, respectfully, and honorably. The team works well together because we are all focused on that goal – to provide for others with whatever we have to offer them. – Ann

MISSION STATEMENT

The Chippewa Valley Free Clinic’s mission is to provide quality health care to and advocacy for individuals of the Chippewa Valley area who have no reasonable health care alternative.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS – WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Volunteer-based free clinics across the nation provide a range of outpatient medical, dental, vision, pharmacy, and mental health care. We are our community’s response to the health care needs for low-income individuals who do not have affordable health coverage.

WE NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS TO PROVIDE COMPASSIONATE CARE!

Our community is hurting right now due to serious healthcare challenges. The Free Clinic may have even more people come to us because of their situation. It would be heartbreaking to turn those in need of care away because we don’t have the necessary volunteers and resources to provide services.

IMMEDIATE VOLUNTEER NEEDS:

- Providers
- Hygienists
- Lab Technicians
- Dentists
- Nurses
- Interpreters



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cvfreeclinic.org
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QR code above

WRITING & GRAPHICS

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