

Clinic supplies donated to help City on a Hill

[Alyssa Bloechl](#), USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin 8:46 a.m. CDT May 23, 2016



(Photo: Alyssa Bloechl/USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)

In 10 years, the Community Clinic of Door County served thousands of people who had little or no insurance. The doors of the clinic closed at the end of March, but the mission of serving people in need will continue to live on through the goodwill of a donation.

As the staff at the Community Clinic helped their patients transition to new providers and services in the last months of operation, pieces of a puzzle were moving together to give the clinic one last opportunity to help others.

Through the grace of serendipity and perhaps a higher power, all of the Community Clinic's medical equipment, exam tables, microscopes, unused needles, family planning items, scales and much more were donated to City on a Hill in Milwaukee for its new free clinic space.

Executive Director of City on a Hill Diane De La Santos said the facility provides health and educational services in a holistic manner to impoverished people living in the surrounding communities, addressing the many symptoms of poverty in Milwaukee.

"We serve holistically because if we were only to meet one need of a person in poverty, we have not helped that person," De La Santos said. "There are too many obstacles to pull yourself out."

City on a Hill works to end poverty first by giving children and young adults the educational, emotional, family, faith and life skills they need to succeed, with the goal of breaking the generational poverty cycle. Second, the nonprofit provides a free clinic, education on diabetes, providing food and medication needs and more. Additionally, they provide poverty education to their communities so people can become part of the change.

The free health clinic has been open since 2001 at City on a Hill and has been growing each year since. In 2015 alone, more than 1,500 people were served. The clinic is run primarily by volunteers, including medical professionals, and one staffed nurse practitioner.



Volunteers move furniture out of the Community Clinic on March 19. (Photo: Submitted by Jo Guenzel)

Every month the clinic hosts a health outreach event where at least 300 people are served within a few hours. The outreach events offer doctor visits, educational programming, hot food and counselors.

As more people used the clinic, it became obvious City on a Hill needed more space. Last year they received two grants from Aurora Healthcare, one of which was to renovate an old clinic on their property that could not be used because of code violations.

With barely enough money to renovate, De La Santos was at a loss for where to get supplies to operate. The faith-based organization turned to God, who has been providing them with what they needed for years.

Jane Herlitz, former director at the Community Clinic, said she had made a connection with De La Santos, through a member of her church, Sturgeon Bay Community Church. Learning that City on a Hill had earned the grant but did not have funds for supplies, Herlitz knew what the Community Clinic could do to help.

On March 19, a large truck and trailer rolled up to the Community Clinic and a loading team from the church loaded the materials destined for Milwaukee.

“The services we offered to this community were important,” Herlitz said. “We’re grateful the supplies are not going to waste and we can end our services on a positive note.”

“We got everything we needed,” De La Santos said. “It was wonderful.”

The renovated clinic will have many benefits. The current clinic space has one exam room, and the new space will have five. Additionally, patients will have access to more privacy, a pharmacy, waiting room, children’s area, offices for the doctors and more.

“We’re extremely grateful to the team at the Community Clinic of Door County and Sturgeon Bay Community Church for making it possible to equip a clinic hundreds of miles away,” De La Santos said. “We’re grateful to God for making the connection we could have never made on our own.”

History

Before becoming City on a Hill, back in the late 1800s, an old farmhouse in the same location was used as a hospital run by Christians who worked to care for the medical needs of the poor. After years of growth and funding came in, Lutheran Hospital was running as a charitable organization. Eventually, it merged with another hospital to become Good Samaritan Medical Center.

In the mid-1990s Aurora Health Care, which owned the hospital at the time, took the services of the hospital and merged them at a different location in Milwaukee, leaving large buildings empty. In 2000, the local Assemblies of God ministry and the national Convoy of Hope group hosted a community event offering a job fair, meals, health services and more, all in the vacant hospital’s parking lot. The nearly 8,000 attendees showed Aurora there was potential for further work on this site.

Working with Urban Ministry Center, four buildings were transferred to create a nonprofit, now known as City on a Hill. The hill is now back to the original mission, serving the poor in Milwaukee.

The Community Clinic, like City on a Hill, served people in need in Door County who could not afford to receive care without insurance. It was not classified as a free clinic, but service fees were offered based on the ability to pay.

According to one of the Community Clinic’s founders, integrative health practitioner Jo Guenzel, the clinic it was formed as a spin-off of the former Open Door Community Health Center, which was housed in Door County Memorial Hospital. When the Community Clinic opened in 2000, Aurora Health Care was moving into Sturgeon Bay and donated a lot of equipment to the Clinic.

About a year ago, the board of directors made the decision to close the Clinic. Herlitz said they recognized that with the Affordable Care Act in place, their clientele was significantly decreasing. One of the Clinic’s board members, Jeanne Rable, was certified to assist people enroll in the marketplace, and did so with many of the Clinic’s clients.

“We did not want to enable the process, we wanted more self-sufficient people in our community,” Herlitz said. “And it allowed our clients more well-rounded medical care.”

Free clinic will cater to needy

Those lacking in insurance can find primary care at new health center

By SEAN FITZGERALD
ADVOCATE STAFF REPORTER

Door County's medical community is opening its arms to reach out to those who in the past had difficulties affording quality health and dental care.

Identifying a lack of health and dental services being provided to low-income families in the county, a consortium of health and dental professionals, health care providers and social service agencies plan to introduce the Open Door Community Health Center this summer. The health center aims at providing primary health and dental care to financially disadvantaged people regardless of their ability to pay. The tentative opening date is June 12.

The Open Door Community Health Center will set up shop in the building occupied by the former Door County Medical Center, 345 S. 18th Ave. in Sturgeon Bay. The space, now owned by Door County Memorial Hospital-Ministry



Story on the Open Door Community Health Center that appeared in the Advocate in 2000. (Photo: Submitted)

Guenzel said she thinks the story is beautiful because there were so many amazing and supportive people and organizations who cared about the clinic's success, and now they get to see their hard work live on in another similar organization.

"The closing was emotional, but we closed in the spirit of success," Guenzel said. "It closed because of a good thing – we're now closer to everyone being covered and taken care of medically."

The free clinic at City on a Hill is set to open in June. A portion of the supplies from the Community Clinic are also being donated to Coventry Care, a free clinic operated in Sister Bay by Dr. Joan Traver and nurse practitioner Martha Coventry.

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