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# The Bridge

PROVIDENCE  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Issue 17: Fall 2011

www.providencechc.org

## Bridging gaps thanks to preparation and collaboration with partners.



There are more good things happening at PCHC than I have room to tell, but here are a few highlights.

For starters, if you think Healthcare Reform is not coming until 2014, I can tell you the preparation is not waiting. Changes are well under way at PCHC today. From new construction to new programs, we are striving to meet the needs of our patients and help them stay or get healthier.

You'll notice nearly all our initiatives are collaborations – with partners such as The Providence Center, Providence Housing, the City of Providence, and Blue Cross & Blue Shield of RI to name a few. It's only by working with our partners, we can leverage their combined resources to deliver services that make a difference in the lives of our patients – and break down the silos of care that exist today.

Another crucial project underway is our adoption of an Electronic Health Record (EHR). In October we went live with our new Practice Management System and in February 2012 we will add EHR. PCHC has joined Health Choice Network to host and develop our MIS systems. And using Sage Intergy's CHC applications, we will soon develop a certified Primary Care Medical Home and meet national Meaningful Use requirements. Our patients will benefit from all the above – with faster service, reduced errors and safer transmission of information among labs, pharmacies, hospitals and physicians.

So together, our dedicated partners and staff continue to make a difference in the lives of our patients and their families.

Merrill R. Thomas  
CEO, Providence Community Health Centers

## PCHC Teams with Providence Center for State's First Integrated Primary and Behavioral Health Clinic

Access to primary health care by individuals with behavioral health problems is no longer a hurdle thanks to a partnership between Providence Community Health Centers (PCHC) and The Providence Center (TPC). The two made Rhode Island health care history on June 10th when they officially opened the state's first integrated primary and behavioral health clinic at The Providence Center's 530 North Main Street facility.

Because people with mental illness or substance use disorders are less likely to have a primary care physician and more likely to have chronic health problems, they live an average 25 years less than the overall American population. Now, however, patients can receive coordinated physical, mental health and substance use

care under one roof, with access to community support.

"PCHC's partnership with The Providence Center will provide an immediate impact on our community and serve many of our most vulnerable residents," said Merrill Thomas, CEO of PCHC. "And the team approach is one we are all excited about."

PCHC's Dr. Marisa Cristina Chan, M.D., a nurse and an assistant currently staff the clinic three days a week – and have already seen the benefits of the integrated approach. "Thanks to tight coordination, I am able to make an informed diagnosis," said Dr. Chan. "And with information on the patient's mental health history and medications through the shared medical record, I can safely prescribe medications and avoid drug interactions."

*Health Clinic continued on page two*



Left to right: Providence City Council President Michael Solomon, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, Representative David Cicilline, Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Roberts and Craig Stenning (far right) director of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, assist Dale K. Klatzker, Ph.D., and Merrill Thomas, CEO, PCHC, in officially opening PCHC at North Main.

## Twice as Many Locals Hired to Construct Prairie Avenue Site



Checking progress at the Prairie Avenue health center's construction site are: PCHC CEO, Merrill R. Thomas, Board chairperson, Christina Zanfagna and Medical Director, Stanley Hoyt Block, M.D., FAAP.

South Providence residents driving by the future home of PCHC's state-of-the-art clinic on Prairie Avenue may recognize some of their neighbors working at the construction site. That's because PCHC is closing in on its goals of 30% local women and minority contractor participation and 30% local workforce hiring. In fact, local and minority construction hiring by PCHC for the initial phases of the project is more than double the Federal guideline of 10%.

Merrill R. Thomas, PCHC CEO, said that while 30% goals are not easily achievable, we believe that they are nonetheless important and worthy of a concerted and committed effort. "Our main mission will continue to be to improve the health of our patients, but PCHC also wants to leverage our resources and abilities to bring jobs and economic development to improve our local neighborhoods," Thomas said.

Members of PCHC's development team, led by construction manager, BBL Construction Services, have worked closely with the local building trades unions and the Building Futures training program to coordinate contractor partnerships and resident training in the construction trades. In addition, they have collaborated with the Small Business Administration to provide capacity building seminars and workshops to local minority and women contractors.

Long term, South Providence can expect to see an even greater economic upswing as ongoing health center operations and other new businesses bring jobs to the revitalized neighborhood.

## Save the Date!



## PCHC Annual Fund Raiser

November 4th  
at Roger Williams Park  
Botanical Center  
6:30–9:00 p.m.

RSVP by October 24th



375 Allens Avenue  
Providence, RI 02905

## PCHC Mission Statement

"Provide neighborhood-based, high quality and accessible primary medical care to improve the health status of the residents of Providence and surrounding communities, regardless of their ability to pay."

# PCHC Tobacco Treatment Programs Putting Dent in Providence's Habit

It's been a full year since PCHC was tasked with helping to curb Providence's costly tobacco habit – a daunting task considering the tobacco industry spends about \$35 million in Rhode Island each year to promote their products. While success will not come overnight, progress has been made and important seeds of change have been spread among Providence's under-served families and children.

Despite the fact that PCHC received only a small portion of last year's \$3.3 million Federal Stimulus Grant, its impact may be the longest-lasting. That's because PCHC's comprehensive tobacco treatment program works on multiple levels and uses an effective combination of both cessation support services and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

Inside PCHC, two full-time staff members provide one-on-one counseling to patients referred by PCHC physicians as they rotate among all seven clinics each week. Here, patients can also receive NRT medication in the form of gum, patch or lozenge – and are invited to attend group counseling sessions if they feel they need more support.

Throughout the community, two full-time and two part-time staff members lead group counseling sessions in five of Providence Housing Authority's family developments, plus St. Joseph's Hospital, Amos House, John Hope

Settlement House and Anchor Recovery. During each 10-week program, participants receive counseling and peer-to-peer support, as well as learn about the dangers of second-hand smoke and importance of behavioral change. Additionally, they are offered NRT medication, either free or on a low-cost basis. Counseling is also available in multiple languages.

"While all do not quit right away, 100% do cut down, and most reach the personal goals they establish when they begin the program," said Mary

Jean Francis, PCHC Vice President, Performance Improvement. "It's not uncommon for a patient to cut back from seven cigarettes a day to four per week – and that's a significant lifestyle change."

One group participant said: "I didn't have success using the patches before. This group makes the difference – getting to talk things out.

I haven't smoked for almost four months."

Another bonus of the community-based portion of the tobacco treatment program is that it gives PCHC counselors, Sally Mendzela and Sabrina Soares, the opportunity to evangelize on behalf of PCHC – and personally describe the range of affordable, quality family health care services available at its nearby clinics including PCHC EXPRESS. That's getting the word out to those who need to listen most.

**"This group makes the difference. I haven't smoked for almost four months."**

## PCHC Dental Clinic Meeting a Huge Need With Warm Smiles and Quality Care



Broad smiles of hygienist Carleen Signore and her patient tell the story of PCHC Dental Clinic's success.

Five years after the Providence Community Health Centers opened the doors of its PCHC Dental Clinic, the numbers tell the story of its success and of the significant need for

dental care the clinic is meeting for the children and pregnant women it serves.

In 2006, the clinic's dentists handled 4,820 patient encounters. In 2010, that number doubled. In 2008 the clinic welcomed 732 new patients. In 2010 that number was more than 1,400.

"We currently have 150 children under age 19 on our waiting list," said Cameron Chrystal, PCHC dental supervisor. "But there is no wait for newly pregnant women."

The Dental Clinic provides comprehensive dental care in a child-friendly atmosphere. Dental cleanings, x-rays, sealants, restorations and extractions are available during extended office hours. Clinic staff members also work closely with a network of local referring doctors to ensure that patients receive the treatment they require.

Chrystal said the economic recession has made the clinic's services even more important for the population PCHC serves in the

city. "For many, especially pregnant women, we are the only stop in town," she said. "We deal with hardship cases every day."

The clinic has seen a steady increase in the amount of free care provided. In 2008, free-care patients totaled just 105. Now open every other Saturday, the clinic provided more than 1,200 patients with free dental care. "We fulfill a large need," she said, adding that in Rhode Island few dental practices accept Medicaid patients.

## Blue Angel Grant Allows Expanded EXPRESS Hours, More Patients



Michele Lederberg, Executive Vice President and General Counsel for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island presents a \$25,000 Blue Angel Community Health Grant to CEO Merrill Thomas.

In support of PCHC EXPRESS as a cost-efficient alternative to the emergency room, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Rhode Island awarded PCHC a \$25,000 Blue Angel Community Health Grant. The grant allows PCHC to hire an additional provider and expand hours of operation at its Cranston Street location in Providence.

Now, patients who are sick with minor conditions such as sore throat, earache or fever and unable to see their regular doctor can visit the PCHC EXPRESS "walk-in clinic" seven days per week, including Sunday and eve-

nings on Monday through Thursday. The extra hours give patients from the other six PCHC centers one more reason to visit PCHC EXPRESS instead of the ER. The convenience of appointments, free parking and a RIPTA bus line are also factors.

This support has allowed PCHC EXPRESS to open six more hours per week, anticipating serving an additional 1,250 patients a year.



## Thank You PCHC Golf Sponsors and Golfers. Save the Date for Next Year's Event!

Generous PCHC sponsors and some beautiful weather helped please everyone at magnificent Shelter Harbor Golf Club in Charlestown, R.I. on June 8th. And, because more than \$53,000 was raised, PCHC can further its mission to provide medical care for our community's under-served families.

Looking ahead, please put Wednesday June 6th on your calendar, as the 2012 Tournament returns to exclusive Shelter Harbor.

### Our 2011 Sponsors and Donors:

**Corporate Sponsor:** Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island

**Lunch and Dinner Sponsor:** ProMutual Group

**Awards Sponsor:** New England Pension Plan Systems, LLC

**Tee Sponsors:** Commonwealth Purchasing Group, LLC, Embolden Design, Inc., Gladworks, Paolino Insurance Agency, Inc. and RDW Group, Inc.

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The ProMutual Foursome from our PCHC 2011 Golf Tournament. Left to right: Angelo Rotella, Anthony Scorpio, Anthony Paolino, and Larry Schoenfeld.

### Health Clinic continued from page one

"Having PCHC here at The Providence Center offers quality behavioral and primary health care to people who need it but cannot normally access it," said Dale K. Klatzker, Ph.D., president/CEO of The Providence Center. "This is a partnership that ensures there is no wrong door to health care."

One key to the partnership's success is the role of Nelly Burdette, Psy.D., director of Integrated Care at The Providence Center. She serves as behavioral health liaison for the clinic, assisting PCHC's medical staff with understanding the unique needs and mental health diagnoses of clients. "The partnership brings together the most successful elements of national models to create a

cohesive, inclusive system that provides access to behavioral health, primary health care and preventive services," Dr. Burdette said.

Thanks to the support of a behavioral health liaison and being on site, Dr. Chan and her staff are able to care for patients who are more challenging. "When a client is in crisis," said Dr. Chan, "we call Dr. Burdette or their case manager for immediate crisis intervention, instead of referring them to a hospital emergency room that may exacerbate their anxiety."

Buoyed by the clinic's success, plans are already being made to expand the clinic's hours and extend services to the community sometime next year.

### Board of Directors

51% of PCHC board members are also our patients.

Vivien Acevedo, LCSW  
Emillian Egbuche  
Colleen Eichorn  
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Hugh F. Lena, Ph.D.  
Elizabeth Melendez  
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### Senior Staff

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## THE PROVIDENCE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS LOCATIONS

**Administrative Offices**  
375 Allens Avenue  
401-444-0400

**Allen Berry**  
202 Prairie Avenue  
401-444-0570

**Capitol Hill**  
40 Candace Street  
401-444-0550

**Central**  
239 Cranston Street  
401-444-0580

**Chafee**  
One Warren Way  
401-444-0530

**Crossroads**  
160 Broad Street  
401-861-2403

**North Main**  
530 North Main Street  
401-415-9500

**Olneyville**  
100 Curtis Street  
401-444-0540

**Dental**  
557 Broad Street  
401-444-0430

**MET Adolescent**  
325 Public Street  
401-752-2693

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[www.providencechc.org](http://www.providencechc.org)