

## **VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SESSION & TOUR**

**Thursday, January 17, 2019  
10:00-11:00**

**841 Case Street, Hendersonville**

Join staff for coffee and a tour to hear more about The Free Clinics and how you can help.

**TO RSVP:** Call TFC at **828.697.8422** or email **volunteer@thefreeclinics.org**

## **WHAT ELSE ARE WE UP TO?**

**Dr. Steven Crane, The Free Clinics's Volunteer Medical Director** since 2001, was instrumental in the visioning and launch of the Bridges to Health program in 2010.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation's leading philanthropy on health and health care, asked Dr. Crane and executive director Judy Long to contribute to their renowned blog series about Bridges to Health and the unique challenges that rural individuals face. Read the *Culture of Health* blog here: [www.rwjf.org/en/blog.html](http://www.rwjf.org/en/blog.html)

Dr. Crane shared the success of TFC and the Bridges to Health program with a national audience in November at the *American Public Health Association* conference. **TFC is leading the way in discussions of advancing health equity!**

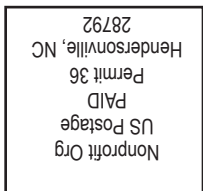
**Bridges to Health**

**Community Impact Focus:**

**Winter 2018**



Return Service Requested



## **A Message from Our Executive Director: Judith Long**



Our Bridges to Health program arose from curiosity about hospital emergency department over-utilization: that UNC Pardee had identified 255 patients who had an average of 10 emergency department visits in one year, generating over \$6M in uncompensated care, fully half of the uncompensated care for that year. Bridges began as an experiment—to see if by breaking down every possible barrier faced by the most vulnerable folks we could reduce inappropriate hospital utilization and improve the health of these patients—and evolved into a model.

We have just completed our eighth year of this innovative program and continue to exceed our wildest expectations. **We reduced unnecessary visits by 59%, saving the hospital over \$500,000 per year.** Even more significantly, we dramatically improved patients' health, as you can see from the data. Perhaps the *most impressive* dimension of this data is the comparison to our peers. For instance, only 67% of patients with diabetes had healthy blood sugars at NC community health centers in 2016 and only 72% of patients at NC free clinics, whereas 80% of Bridges patients with diabetes had healthy blood sugar. **These results become even more dramatic when you consider that Bridges works with the most difficult patients**—those with multiple complex chronic medical challenges, behavioral health and substance misuse concerns, and severe economic deprivation.

**Bridges has been the subject of two peer-reviewed articles and won national recognition.** This month it is the focus of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation *Culture of Health* Blog and last month our volunteer Medical Director Dr. Steven Crane presented Bridges at the American Public Health Association meeting in San Diego.

We continue to expand upon this incredible model, launching a group at the Henderson County Detention Facility in November, planning for a new site in collaboration with Blue Ridge Health at their 7th Avenue location in January, and building a group for survivors with our exciting new Phoenix Project. Other communities want to replicate the Bridges program; we are currently working with safety net providers in Rockingham County to launch a Bridges program there and working as a team to document core program principles and best practices to enable others to bring this successful model to their communities.

**828.697.8422**

**info@thefreeclinics.org**

## What is the Bridges to Health Program?

**BRIDGES TO HEALTH (BTH) IS AN AWARD-WINNING, INNOVATIVE MODEL OF CARE FOR OUR MOST VULNERABLE PATIENTS.**

Bridges patients are supported in a group setting by a dedicated care team comprised of two physicians, a nurse practitioner, a psychologist, an occupational therapist, a patient health advocate, a licensed clinical addiction specialist, and a doctor of pharmacy. Through a whole-person approach and intensive case management, our patients are able to make life-affirming and long-lasting changes to their health.

The Free Clinics currently hosts **four** ongoing Bridges to Health groups: two at **The Free Clinics** office, one at **Blue Ridge Health-Justice Street**,

and one at the **Henderson County Detention Center**. In the **2017-18** year, Bridges served **130** unduplicated patients & provided **938** total hours of care.

2010      2011      2012      2013      2014      2015      2016      2017      2018

In **2010**, Bridges to Health gets started with **36** patients, reducing unnecessary emergency visits by **70.4%** within the first year.

In **2014**, BTH program receives grant funding to expand service. Patient total reaches **123**, tripling in size.

In **2016**, Bridges to Health program is top-three finalist for prestigious *Innovations in Rural Health Award* from the **Kate B. Reynolds Foundation**.

In **2017**, **Dr. Steven Crane**, TFC's **Volunteer Medical Director**, wins national *Award for Health Equity* from the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** for his vision and work with the Bridges to Health program.

## The Bridges to Health model has produced stellar outcomes for our patients.

**Over the past five years:**

**94%** of patients are or became housed

**64%** had improvement in their functional status (ability to care for themselves)

**61%** with depression experienced reduction in depression (PHQ9 scores)

**42%** of patients are or became employed

**59%** with hypertension lowered and maintained their blood pressure to healthy levels

**80%** of patients with diabetes controlled their A1C (blood sugar)

## Talking with Julie Sabin, RN - Bridges to Health Case

JULIE SABIN IS BEGINNING HER 5TH YEAR AS A NURSE WITH THE BRIDGES TO HEALTH PROGRAM.

### How do prospective patients find you?

We have patients who find us through referrals, and a referral can come from anyone--someone who sits at the front desk, a physician, it can come from one

of their friends, just about anywhere.

### How many patients come to a session?

We have generally anywhere from 7-10 patients in a session. We have

some patients that have been coming for several years, while others graduate out. We treat basic medical issues, such as heart and pulmonary disease, and we also address issues of substance misuse and other mental health concerns. Our patients usually have co-occurring medical and behavioral health issues.

### What is the most impactful aspect of the Bridges to Health program for the patients you work with?

I really think it's the support that they get from each other. It's one thing for people to come and see the doctor, but I think one of the biggest impacts is the supportive feedback and encouragement that they get and give to each other.



At a Bridges session in October: (L-R) patient; Kenesha Smith, PharmD, TFC Pharmacy Manager; Julie Sabin, RN, TFC Bridges to Health Nurse; Jim Hall, PhD, Volunteer Mental Health Clinician; patient.