

## VOLUNTEERS

We can always use more help at The Free Clinics, from doctors and nurses, to those who can repair bicycles or garden.

Call 828.697.8422 x131 or email [volunteer@thefreeclinics.org](mailto:volunteer@thefreeclinics.org) to learn more about our opportunities and discuss how you can help!

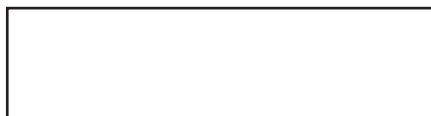
## WE'RE HIRING!

NOW HIRING!

Join our **amazing** team and make a difference in your community! We have two open nursing positions:

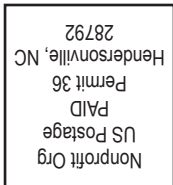
- **Bilingual (Spanish) Diabetes RN Case Manager (FT)**
- **HopeShot MAT RN Case Manager (FT)**

If you or someone you know would be interested in either of these positions, please find more information on our website at [thefreeclinics.org/employment](http://thefreeclinics.org/employment).



Winter 2021  
Community Impact Focus:  
*HopeShot Clinic*

Return Service Requested



## A Message from Our Executive Director: Judith Long



I have not yet met a single person who has not been touched by the opioid epidemic in a personal way, with stories of how it has disrupted relationships, destroyed lives and livelihoods, and taken beautiful souls far too soon.

TFC has been a visible part of our community's efforts to address substance use disorder (SUD) since 2009, deepening our engagement over time. We have served as fiscal agent for Hope Coalition (formerly HopeRX) since 2013. We began dispensing Naloxone in 2014 and providing medication assisted therapy (MAT) in 2018.

2020 added new dimensions. In January, we partnered with the Henderson County Sheriff, Detention Center, and Department of Public Health to imbed two staff at the detention center, improving care during detention and transitioning inmates with SUD into treatment. In July, we partnered with the Henderson County Department of Public Health to launch the Post Overdose Response Team (PORT). And in October, we partnered with Economy Drugs and Blue Ridge Health to create a seamless system for both immediate access to MAT upon release and long-term treatment.

We based our initial MAT-bridge project on the recommendations of the experts in the arena of SUD—recommendations that emphasize immediate access to life-saving medication. While we knew we were saving lives, we were not satisfied with our impact on the health, life, and recovery journeys of these newly released inmates. We completely redesigned our project in March 2021 as a **person-centered, peer-led** project, aptly named HopeShot. And now we are changing lives—improving our outcomes from 12% to 90%—and deeply engaging persons in early recovery.

It is my honor and blessing to lead The Free Clinics—and never more so than when we collectively, creatively, and collaboratively change lives together with health and hope!

828.697.8422

[info@thefreeclinics.org](mailto:info@thefreeclinics.org)

## HopeShot: A Better Chance for Recovery

*"Providing a shot of hope, rather than a shot of dope."*

The US has been experiencing a second pandemic over the past two years—with skyrocketing rates of substance use disorder and overdose deaths. Persons transitioning from incarceration are one of the most vulnerable populations with respect to substance use disorder and overdose. With two imbedded staff at the Henderson County Detention Center, The Free Clinics is uniquely positioned to support inmates on their journey towards recovery.

### What Is the Need?

**2/3** of the  
22,000+  
inmates  
released in NC each year

have  **substance use disorders**

In the first **2 weeks**  
of being released from  
prison, inmates have a

**40% higher**

risk of death from opioid  
overdose



compared to the general population

That risk increases to

**74 times**

the normal rate  
of deaths due to heroin  
overdose



within the same time frame.

Source: American Journal of Public Health, 2018.

### What We Did

- Implemented recommendations from leading thinkers that immediate access to MAT is the life-saving goal.
- Launched in October 2020 with support from National Association of Free & Charitable Clinics and CVS Foundation.
- Partnered with Economy Drugs and Blue Ridge Health.
- During the first 5.5 months, **TFC saved 75 lives** by providing immediate access to inmates upon release from detention.
- Unfortunately, **only 12%** remained on the medication and engaged with their recovery journey.
- Unsatisfied, TFC completely redesigned the program in March 2021 as a person-centered model **led by Peer Support Specialists**.

### What's the Impact?

The new version of the program officially re-launched in April this year as HopeShot Clinic.

**Over the 5.5 months since the redesign, the retention rate has skyrocketed to an incredible 90%!**

These clients remained on medication and are all deeply engaged with TFC, the Peer Specialists, and their recovery journey. **Peers—those who have successfully recovered, themselves—make the difference!**

### Talking with Steven Crane, MD - Volunteer Medical Director

**What makes HopeShot so different from other MAT programs?**

This group is led by peer support specialists, who are

people with lived experience in recovery. The groups are definitely more “real”, accepting everyone who is wanting to move to living life on its own terms without mind-altering substances.

**What in the group seems to have the biggest impact?**

As our peer support colleagues like to say, “The opposite of addiction is connection”. The folks in the group really seem to connect with the peers and each other.

**What are your hopes for the group in the future?**

*Some more help!* The group is growing so quickly that group visits are going to be too crowded. I think we’ll need to find a way to double capacity in the next 3-6 months if we continue to succeed in engaging those just released from jail or experiencing an overdose.



Hope Shot care team (L-R): Front: Dr. Steven Crane, Physician; Sonia Vera, Patient Health Advocate. Back: Lexie Wilkins, Peer Support; Emily Shock, Patient Health Advocate; Debbie Dugan, RN Case Manager; Kelly LaRowe, Peer Support