

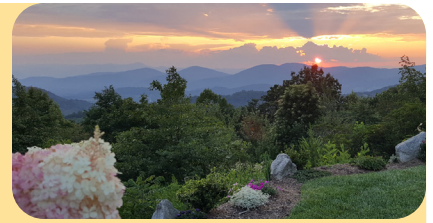
CUMMINGS COVE CARES

Cummings Cove Cares is hosting a new fundraiser to benefit The Free Clinics with the sale of greeting card sets featuring original local photography.

Please find more information and ordering details on the separate enclosure. Contact Sarah at 828.697.8422 x131 for questions.

SAVE THE DATE

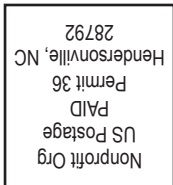
- Please mark your calendar for our upcoming **and final** *Sunset Dining on the Mountaintop at Cabin Ridge*: an open-air, farm-to-table fine dining benefit event on **Sunday, July 10** from 6-9pm.
- Featuring gourmet, multi-course meals prepared by Asheville favorite *Food Experience* and expert wine pairings from *Crate Wine Market & Project*, this evening is not one to be missed!
- Our generous hostess and proprietor of The Cabin Ridge is retiring at the end of the year, making this our farewell celebration in this unparalleled setting.
- More details and registration information will be announced soon for this limited attendance, one-of-a-kind evening!



Spring 2022
Community Impact Focus:
Vaya Health's Pharmacy Grant



Return Service Requested



A Message from Our Executive Director: Judith Long



The Free Clinics initiated our first behavioral health program in December 2006 when we opened our Psychiatric Clinic, after the community mental health program closed very suddenly. When TFC started on the behavioral health journey, we had a tremendous amount to learn—a whole new set of initials and acronyms, whole new teams of partners and volunteers, and a sensitivity of and presence to a whole new complex of diagnoses, symptoms, medications, and side effects. Moving into behavioral health was a deeply significant step for TFC—one which continues to resonate through our entire organization every day.

Since that time, we have become a visible and vocal advocate for high quality behavioral health care across our community. We have expanded from the original psychiatric clinic to seven behavioral health programs and the explicit integration of behavioral health services in all of our 10 primary care services. We have a clinician imbedded at the Henderson County Detention Center; we lead the Henderson County Post Overdose Response Team; we offer counseling and psychiatric care navigation. We offer evidence-based treatment for those in very early recovery from substance use disorder. From our humble beginnings in 2006, we have become a full-service behavioral health provider.

Significantly, **we are funded to be THE psychotropic pharmacy for Henderson and Polk Counties.** We stock twice as many behavioral health medications than any other type—including Naloxone, the medication to reverse opioid overdose, which we started carrying in 2014.

Recognizing the secondary behavioral health pandemic over these past two years, **Vaya Health** provided significant additional funding to expand the psychotropic medications we offer to patients. Thanks to this investment by **Vaya Health**, we were able to add six new medications and the nasal version of Naloxone. And as you will read, these medications are changing lives.

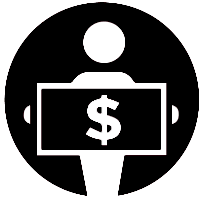
It is my honor and blessing to lead The Free Clinics—and never more so than when we collectively, creatively, and collaboratively change lives together with health and hope!

828.697.8422

info@thefreeclinics.org

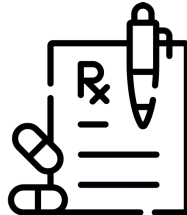
TFC is THE psychotropic pharmacy for Henderson and Polk Counties

Access to pharmaceuticals is often the critical, life-saving dimension that is missing for low-income, uninsured persons. Medications are extremely costly. Without access to necessary medications, illness goes untreated until it reaches the critical state that drives patients to the hospital. TFC's pharmacy focuses upon medications to treat the chronic diseases most common in our community: diabetes, cardiac disease/hypertension, pulmonary disease/asthma, and behavioral health conditions. TFC's pharmacy is *the* resource for psychotropic medications for any patient in the behavioral health system, as well as providing over \$250,000 worth of psychotropic medications to inmates at the Henderson County Detention Center. During the behavioral health crisis spurred by the pandemic, our local behavioral health system significantly increased its investment in psychotropic medications available through TFC.



\$500,000

Awarded from Vaya Health in June 2021 for psychotropic medications



Medications added

- Brexipiprazole (Rexulti)
- Cariprazine (Vraylar)
- Paliperidone (Invega & Invega Sustenna)
- Vilazodone (Viibryd)
- Vortioxetine (Trintellix)



66 prescriptions dispensed

\$58k
(our cost)

\$156k
Average retail price

\$\$\$\$ = \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

How These Medicines Change Lives

Joseph's Story

When Joseph* came to TFC and joined our Bridges to Health program after being released from prison, he was experiencing extreme mental health issues—major anxiety disorder, psychosis. He also had a history of substance use disorder prior to his imprisonment and did not want to relapse after getting clean. As he joined our program, Joseph demonstrated severe anxiety and mistrust. He would not sit down with group or make eye contact for the first several months. Each group begins with a meditation, but Joseph did not meditate with the group; he would stand vigil by the door, keeping watch.

Joseph had been prescribed anti-psychotic medications while he was in prison. When he first came to us, he was experiencing *tardive dyskinesia*, a common side effect from anti-psychotic medications that can cause jerky reactions, shaking, or tics. At that time, we did not have any medications to offer that would not cause that side effect. Once we received the Vaya Health grant, we were able to add several new medicines in our pharmacy. At the next appointment, our volunteer psychiatrist Dr. Bierrenbach prescribed one of the newer medications, Rexulti, for Joseph. Not long after receiving the new medication, his care team noticed that Joseph was no longer having the jerking reactions.

Despite the reduction in side effects, Joseph knew that all was not yet well with him. He told his care team, "I don't feel as great as I did before, even though my jumpiness has gone away. I want to go back to my old meds." Our care team worked with Joseph to optimize his medication dosage. With that adjustment, **Joseph is now thriving.**

Rexulti retails for \$1600 a month—a price far out of reach for TFC's low-income, uninsured patients like Joseph.

Melody's Story

Melody* became a TFC patient in 2018. She had been experiencing hallucinations and extreme paranoia and also had a history of substance misuse. For four years, our team has worked diligently with Melody to find the right blend of medications which would provide the best outcomes, but never found the right combination until last summer.

After TFC received the Vaya Health funding, our volunteer psychiatrist Dr. Bierrenbach started Melody on one of the new medications, Invega oral tablets, an anti-psychotic. Melody had a history of not taking her oral medications as prescribed, skipping dosages which reduced medication efficacy. Once we found the right dosage of the new medication, her care team engaged her about the possibility of switching to an injectable version of the same medication. Melody refused because she is terrified of needles, promising that she would take her pills as prescribed because she said she already felt a positive difference—that they were making her feel better.

Invega has changed Melody's life in just six short months: she has been more responsible in caring for her ailing mother, she dependably engages her care team and interacts well with others, she takes her medications consistently, and she has not been using illegal substances.

A one month supply of Invega costs \$900 at a retail pharmacy. Melody would not have access to this life-changing medicine without the funds from Vaya Health.

*names changed to protect patient privacy