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



## Collaborating Across the Community for Greater Health Equity

**Photo:** Arlington Free Clinic staff and patients are participating in Community Progress Network's (CPN) quarterly roundtable discussions—which provide valuable opportunities to learn from those accessing Arlington's social services about the challenges they face.

Arlington consistently ranks among the three healthiest counties in Virginia, but these numbers hide tremendous disparities that persist in certain neighborhoods where 45% of children live in poverty and life expectancies are as much as 10 years less than for people residing in more affluent, adjacent neighborhoods.

By the time patients seek care at AFC, many already have serious health conditions including cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. According to public health research, the health of individuals in poverty is greatly affected by their socioeconomic conditions. For example, if a family doesn't have access to healthy food choices, they are at greater risk for heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and even certain cancers. Because of this, AFC is actively participating in county-wide efforts to address social determinants of health in our community.

*Continued on page 2.*

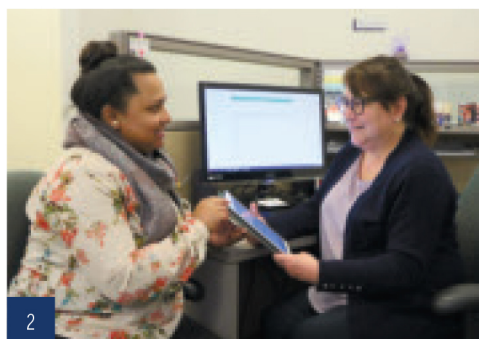


# Collaborating Across the Community for Greater Health Equity (cont.)

Arlington Free Clinic is working with partners community-wide on tackling the root causes of poor health. Here are several initiatives AFC is participating in:

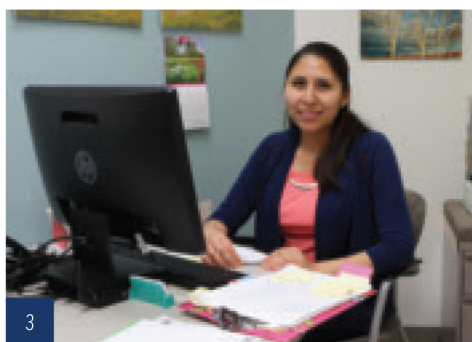
## Northern Virginia Health Foundation Collaborative Grant

The four clinics serving Arlington's most vulnerable—Arlington Free Clinic, Virginia Hospital Center's Outpatient Clinic, Arlington Pediatric Center, and Arlington Department of Human Services' Maternity Clinic—are collecting data on non-medical factors that affect our patients' health including housing conditions, food insecurity, transportation, physical/emotional abuse, and companionship. This data will be shared with county leaders who can direct resources to address these problems.



## 200 Bridges Pilot Program

AFC is a partner in Arlington's Bridges Out of Poverty Program, a county-wide initiative to empower our low-income neighbors. Local safety-net organizations and county agencies are working directly with 200 of Arlington's high-need families to help parents and their children obtain access to adequate housing, better wages, healthcare, and educational advancement.



**Photos:** 1) A CPN roundtable session 2) Tahsin Khan, teaching AFC's eligibility specialist to use the new social determinants of health screening tool 3) Anabel, our Social Services Case Manager, works with patients in 200 Bridges

## Community Progress Network (CPN)

AFC is a member of a coalition of more than 30 nonprofits, government agencies, educators, and elected officials committed to Arlington's vision of inclusivity and diversity. CPN is hosting quarterly roundtable discussions to learn from those who are using Arlington's social services about the challenges they face. The first three meetings—on education, healthcare, and housing—drew hundreds of low-income Arlington residents. Many AFC patients participated and some of our staff volunteered to serve as note takers and table hosts.

The social data we're collecting; the individual experiences we're gathering as we guide a handful of AFC patients through the 200 Bridges pilot; and the relationships being built through regular, cross-sector collaboration support our goal of identifying the biggest challenges to our patients' health and strategically directing resources toward interventions that hold the greatest promise.





## Expanding Impact through Dental-Only Pilot

Our new dental clinic has the capacity to provide oral health services to Arlington Free Clinic's 1,600 patients *and then some*. Thanks to this additional capacity, we are exploring ways to make dental care available to more underserved groups in the community. Starting first with former AFC patients who recently enrolled in Virginia Medicaid (see update below) but still have no dental coverage, we hope to eventually expand our Dental-Only pilot program to other Arlingtonians in need. For instance, many low-income older adults in Arlington have Medicare—health coverage for those age 65 and older—that does not include dental coverage.

Through our Dental-Only program, for the first time ever, AFC is caring for individuals with medical (but no dental) insurance in order to confront the gap in dental care that persists not only for the uninsured, but also the underinsured.



Tri Tran, DDS working in AFC's new dental clinic

## Arlington Free Clinic & Medicaid Expansion

When we learned last spring that Virginia would be expanding its Medicaid program at the start of the New Year, we dug into the data and polled our local partners to better understand what the healthcare needs of Arlington's low-income community would be post-Medicaid expansion. For various reasons, thousands of Arlington adults will still not have access to health insurance of any kind. Knowing this, AFC remains committed to our mission of providing care to those with no other options.



Patient registering for Arlington Free Clinic

**While we're thrilled that expansion will help thousands of Arlingtonians, gaps in care remain. To address these gaps, AFC has made the following commitments:**

1. Continue to provide a comprehensive healthcare home for those who don't qualify for Medicaid or other forms of insurance (the number of Arlingtonians who will continue to be uninsured unfortunately remains far greater than the number we can serve); and
2. Pilot programs for people who have obtained Medicaid but need services that Medicaid does not cover—to the extent that AFC's capacity allows (be sure to read this newsletter's Dental Update for more on what this will look like).





Leigh Watlington, MD

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Leigh Watlington, MD

I have been sensitive to socioeconomic and gender inequalities throughout my medical career. While it's exciting to see some movement happening at the systems-level, I love getting to be part of the change occurring all around me, one clinic—or one food bank, shelter, or mentoring program at a time.

Twice a month, for the past 15 years, I've gotten to use what I call my "GYN-only" Spanish (with AFC's bilingual clinic manager on hand to ensure nothing gets lost in translation) to practice medicine in a setting where I can spend as much time as I need helping to solve a patient's problem. In private practice, you typically have 15 minutes per encounter. At AFC, between talking with the patient and doing a biopsy or necessary test right then and there, I can easily spend an hour. Sometimes the talk is the most important part of the treatment!

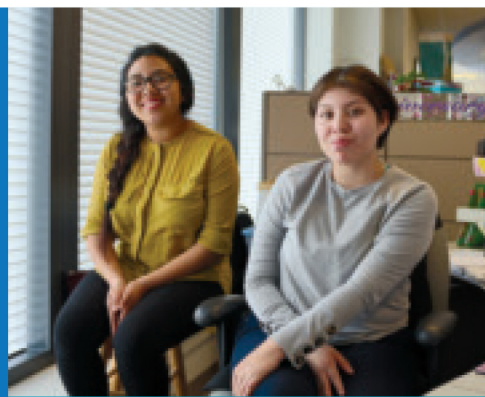
Not only is this model wonderful from the provider's perspective, it is also beneficial to our women who work so hard in their jobs and at home but have very little extra time or money. It's often due to their lack of resources that their needs are more challenging and conditions are more advanced—but that's where AFC comes in—counteracting health disparities through the generosity of an incredible volunteer force and committed donors.

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

### Urban Alliance

Arlington Free Clinic has long served as a training site for students preparing to become doctors, medical assistants, counselors, nurses, nurse practitioners, and pharmacists. Opening up our organization to students allows us to introduce the next generation to the needs of medically underserved populations and the importance of giving back through service or vocation.

Five years ago, Urban Alliance, a national nonprofit that provides economically-disadvantaged high school seniors with paid, professional internships, approached us about hosting student interns. While we're always happy to support young people interested in health careers, we soon learned that AFC was going to be gaining as much or more than the students through this partnership!



Heide & Elizabeth, our 2019 Urban Alliance interns.

We've been lucky to have worked with extremely impressive students who rapidly became an integral part of our team. Since Urban Alliance interns are with us four days a week for nine months, we're able to truly integrate them into our organization. Not only do they support our staff, they can actually fill in and cover administrative positions when necessary. The Clinic saves both time and money, and the students learn new skills and get experience working in a professional environment—a definite win-win situation!

SAVE THE DATE  
OCTOBER 26, 2019

# AN Autumn AFFAIR

ANNUAL BENEFIT GALA  
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Ritz-Carlton • Tysons Corner  
Tickets and sponsorships are available at:  
[www.afc gala.givesmart.com](http://www.afc gala.givesmart.com)

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### Rosé in the Rose Garden

June 6, 2019 from 6-8pm  
*Party with a Purpose hosted by Katy & David Banks*  
Enjoy bites & various rosé wines to complement your night in the garden  
[www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org/rose](http://www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org/rose)

### Hoops for your Health 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament

June 4-5, 2019 at 7pm  
Marymount University Gymnasium  
Grab your friends and join us for our 12th Annual 3-on-3 basketball tournament  
[www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org/hoops-2019](http://www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org/hoops-2019)

### 9th Annual Clare & Don's Beach Shack Fundraiser

September 26, 2019 from 5-9pm  
*Clare & Don's Beach Shack*  
130 N. Washington Street, Falls Church  
Enjoy great food, live music, and a fantastic raffle—fun for the whole family!

### The Power of Pink: Working Out to Stop Breast Cancer

October 10, 2019 (in Tysons Corner)  
October 17, 2019 (in Bethesda)  
This high-energy event, featuring an hour-long workout at Equinox followed by a luncheon at Nostos in Tysons Corner and Jaleo in Bethesda supports AFC's Breast Health Program. To register, visit: [www.power-of-pink.org](http://www.power-of-pink.org)





VHC Hospitalists (left to right) Drs. Aysha Farooqi, Michelle Ng, and Manesh Nachmani

## FROM OUR MEDICAL DIRECTOR

### Happy 75th Anniversary to an Unparalleled Community Partner

Every Arlington Free Clinic patient needs, at a minimum, some basic lab work. However, in a given year, about half of our patients will require additional diagnostic services to detect conditions like cancer or heart disease. Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) not only supports all of these needs, but, when a problem is identified, we can count on a specialist from one of the many VHC Physician Group practices to provide a timely consult, a much-needed procedure, or a life-saving surgery. VHC annually donates thousands of tests, X-rays, and special procedures to AFC patients—more than \$1.6M in services last year alone! The hospital has been an indispensable partner in care since AFC opened 25 years ago.

The list of ways VHC helps AFC is lengthy. The VHC hospitalists work to coordinate a seamless transition from inpatient care to our Clinic for seriously ill patients. The hospital's Financial Aid office allows AFC's Case Manager to submit applications for charity care on behalf of our uninsured patients who require hospital services, a barrier-busting accommodation for our population that has low levels of health literacy. VHC grants our volunteer gastroenterologist, Dr. Ian Shenk (recently retired from Kaiser Permanente)

hospital privileges, which enabled him to perform 37 colonoscopies and 31 upper endoscopies for our patients last year. AFC is in the midst of a multi-year process to select and convert to a new electronic health record (EHR) system. Having recently completed an EHR conversion of its own, VHC has demonstrated its commitment to AFC during our EHR transition process, understanding that the ability to exchange test results and medical information with AFC is crucial to our partnership. In short, AFC simply could not execute its mission without the tremendous support of VHC.

I also want to point out that the affiliation between AFC and VHC is rather unusual in the world of safety-net clinics, and the effects reach far beyond our Clinic. This unique relationship enhances the health of Arlington overall and contributes immeasurably to our sense of community.

Please join me in wishing Virginia Hospital Center a very happy 75th Anniversary and in thanking them for being such a fantastic community partner to Arlington Free Clinic for the past 25 years.



AFC's Medical Director, Joan Bowes Ritter, MD

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INSIDE

**Collaborating Across  
the Community for  
Greater Health Equity**



PATIENT STORY

**Beatriz & Miguel**

It started with unbearable itching and an angry rash. Uninsured, Beatriz paid out-of-pocket for a visit with her family physician. She'd always been healthy, so she anticipated a quick, simple fix. She didn't realize she was facing a mountain.

The doctor ordered a mammogram, and when the results came back, had her get a biopsy. Beatriz's employer stepped up to

help them push past the first crest. Her boss paid for the initial diagnostic costs, and she even helped translate during Beatriz and Miguel's appointment with local breast surgeon, Molly Sebastian, MD.

An excellent, compassionate physician, Dr. Sebastian immediately grasped Beatriz and Miguel's situation and helped them understand the need to act right away. And she gave them the means to do so with a referral to Arlington Free Clinic, where she's been providing pro bono surgeries and consultations to uninsured women with breast cancer for nearly 10 years.

Their first appointment was with AFC's Eligibility Specialist, Marlene. Familiar with their fears, Marlene shared how 12 years ago, when she was a new AFC patient recently diagnosed with breast cancer, AFC helped her family through challenges too overwhelming to face alone.

From that day forward, the same has been true for Beatriz, Miguel, and their two girls—with help coming in the form of volunteer oncologists and counselors, nurses and medical assistants, nutritionists and interpreters. Thanks to our fantastic community, AFC's patients don't have to face mountains alone.



“What happened to our family felt like pushing a big, heavy stone up a mountain, but Arlington Free Clinic was shoulder-to-shoulder, helping to push.”