

Expanding Access to Dental

This spring, we met with the leadership of Culpepper Gardens, the low-income, senior residences in Arlington, to discuss an agreement to begin providing dental care to some of Culpepper's residents who don't have access to dental services. This will add a new partner to the list of nonprofits that we currently work with—A-SPAN and the Virginia Hospital Center Outpatient Clinic—and increases the impact of our dental program on the community.



Anh Bui, PharmD

Behavioral Health Program Updates

Over half of our patients screen positive for a behavioral health (BH) need. In most cases, they are living with significant anxiety/depression or have past experiences of trauma that interfere with the ability to manage overall health. In 2002, we launched a BH program to address these important needs, offering psychiatry evaluations and counseling via volunteers about 10 hours per week. Four years ago, we began collaborating with Northern Virginia Family Service (NVFS) to embed a bilingual counselor at AFC an additional 18 hours per week. COVID-19 forced us to quickly learn how to provide BH services virtually. This effort was so successful that it's clear that many aspects of BH telehealth are here to stay!

This past December, Marielle Levy, LPC, started as AFC's new bilingual BH Program Manager. Ms. Levy looks forward to continuing a review of our BH program and using our investigation to determine how best to support patients through this challenging season and beyond.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Arlington Free Clinic's Role in Ensuring Vaccine Equity

In January, I was asked to serve as a co-chair of Arlington's Complete Vaccination Committee, a role I enthusiastically accepted understanding the importance of advocacy for AFC's patients and our low-income neighbors as the vaccines became available. Through this partnership, AFC has had a front row seat to discussions about vaccine safety, registration processes, and access, and the chance to ensure our neighbors most at risk of being overlooked during this unprecedented public health effort would have a staunch ally.

In February, AFC signed an agreement with the county to provide vaccines to low-income, highly vulnerable residents including *but not limited to* our patients. We lined up volunteers, scheduled patients, and got quality and compliance measures in place so we could give our first 60 doses later that week. Becoming a vaccine site has been a resource intensive—but important—opportunity for AFC to provide a significant service to our patients and others who lack the language skills/digital literacy needed to successfully register for vaccine appointments.

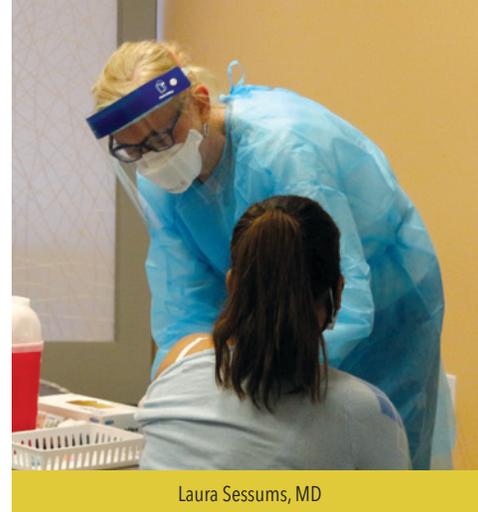
In addition to direct vaccine provision, AFC is committed to communicating accurate, easy-to-understand information about the vaccine. Clinical staff members—trusted sources of information for our patients—are recording videos in multiple languages sharing their experiences getting the vaccine. We provide weekly, bilingual video updates to keep patients informed. Volunteer physicians recorded simple FAQ videos (in 4 languages) to help combat misinformation on the internet. It is our hope that these messages will encourage patients and the broader safety-net community to get the vaccine when it is their turn and ask questions if they still have concerns.

Nancy White
President, Arlington Free Clinic

AFC's Vaccine Clinics

From the moment a safe, effective vaccine became available, helping our patients access it has been a top priority. This work is essential: the zip code where most of our patients live (22204) has consistently experienced positive test rates of more than double that of any other zip code in our county. The majority of our patients have one or more serious health conditions like cancer or diabetes that place them at high risk of complications

should they become infected. Almost all work in "frontline" sectors, such as foodservice and child/eldercare. Their crowded living situations make it difficult, if not impossible, to self-isolate if exposed. And, they are often on the wrong side of the increasingly important "digital divide"—lacking access to the technology, connectivity, and the digital literacy/language skills necessary to navigate online appointment systems.



Laura Sessums, MD

"I felt joy participating in the COVID-19 vaccination clinic! Joy to experience the relief many of the patients expressed verbally and nonverbally; joy to be privileged to be in a position to give back to my community; and joy to know we are seeing some light at the end of this long tunnel."

—Susan Branco, PhD, LPC
Counselor and Vaccine Interpreter

We've been helping our patients and the broader low-income Arlington community (in April, we began also helping low-income, non-AFC clients referred by the county and local nonprofits) understand and access vaccines. As of mid-April, AFC has hosted 21 COVID-19 vaccine clinics and provided 1,668 doses. We plan to continue holding 2-3 weekly vaccine clinics and giving 60-100 doses per clinic.

Each vaccine clinic requires over 30 volunteers! One weekend in March, the roster included four board members, our retired grant writer, the sister of a staff member, and brand-new volunteers who reached out just the week prior upon learning of our need for Spanish-speakers. These joined the ranks of nurses, doctors, and interpreters who have been part of the AFC team for years.

COVID-19: YEAR IN REVIEW

MID-MARCH:

- Onsite visits essentially dropped to zero—except for emergency dental and a small selection of other services that could only be provided in person.
- Pharmacy pick-up was moved to outside AFC's front door.
- Staff who could do their jobs remotely started working from home. Transitioned majority of services to telehealth.
- Increased hours for our only paid medical provider (almost all care at AFC is given by volunteers) from part- to full-time to meet urgent patient needs and hold telehealth visits. Brought two staff nurses back out of retirement to help implement crisis response protocols and meet increased mental health needs.

APRIL:

- Fiberoptic connection established between AFC and Virginia Hospital Center for speedy, secure electronic health data transfer.
- First telehealth appointment with a volunteer physician (Dr. Michael Rapp on April 16th)
- Social Services Case Manager referrals for critical non-medical resources like food, rental assistance, and transportation increase by 46%.
- PPP funding application approved.
- Frontline staff morale boosted thanks to nearly daily lunch donations from local businesses, churches, board members, and Arlington families.

MAY:

- Successfully advocated for a walk-through COVID-19 testing site in partnership with Arlington County for low-income, uninsured/under-insured residents without a car (including many AFC patients). To date, over 12,000 individuals have received testing at the site.
- Positive test rates in 22204 are double that of any other Arlington zip code—they will remain consistently double or higher throughout the crisis.

JUNE:

- Expanded beyond emergency dental care-only and began serving patients whose partials, dentures, and crowns were ready to be delivered.
- Began offering telehealth physical therapy appointments.

JULY:

- AFC Board adopts new strategic plan to guide our work through the pandemic.

AUGUST:

- First volunteer nurse came back onsite to provide patient discharge instructions.
- Resumed offering all dental services except for cleanings.

OCTOBER:

- Held Annual Benefit Gala virtually—and thanks to our generous, loyal supporters we met our goal of raising 25% of our operating budget.
- AFC received Arlington Chamber of Commerce's Best Business Award in the Nonprofit Category.

NOVEMBER:

- In partnership with the County, Arlington Community Foundation, Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, Northern Virginia Health Foundation, Safeway Foundation, a handful of individual donors, and seven nonprofit partners, purchased/distributed over \$600,000 in grocery gift cards to those with difficulty accessing food distribution sites during the pandemic. Through this effort, roughly 500 low-income, food insecure Arlington families are receiving up to \$1,200 (\$200/month for 3-6 months).

DECEMBER:

- VHC and Arlington County began vaccinating AFC's frontline staff and clinical volunteers to assist in the county-wide vaccination effort.

JANUARY:

- Partnered with Virginia Hospital Center to provide our first 50 high-risk patients access to the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Joined Arlington's Complete Vaccination Committee to help lead the community's efforts to achieve high vaccination rates.

MARCH:

- In partnership with the County, became an official COVID-19 vaccination site. Began holding 2-3 vaccine clinics per week, vaccinating 60-100 patients per clinic.

Coming to the Table: Addressing Food Insecurity During the Pandemic

AFC's decision to become actively involved in addressing food insecurity was new for us, but the pandemic underscored the critical importance of "whole-person care"—especially in a crisis—and especially for those struggling with cancer, diabetes, or other serious health conditions.

Support from **Arlington County, Arlington Community Foundation, Northern Virginia Health Foundation, Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, Safeway, and a handful of individual donors**

enabled AFC and our partners (VHC Outpatient Clinic, VHC Pediatrics, DHS Maternal and Child Health, BU-GATA, OAR, and Aspire!) to provide over 500 high-need families \$200 in grocery store gift cards per month for a sustained period (3-6 months). The key to our initiative was sustained support, which gave recipients—including those with limited mobility due to health conditions or care-giving responsibilities—the power to plan ahead during an unpredictable and difficult season, and budget for essentials like rent, utilities, winter clothing, and childcare.

Meet some of the hundreds of families whose loads we were able to make just a little bit lighter thanks to this important initiative:

- 18-year-old high school student who lives with her brother. He pays only half the rent and is rarely home.
- Day laborer on dialysis.

- Single mom with 19-year-old son with special needs who is in a wheelchair.
- Patient in active treatment for breast cancer whose husband's work hours were recently reduced by half.
- Single, older woman with dementia and psychosis who is cared for by her sister and niece.
- Young father whose wife recently died of cancer. He is caring for and supporting their two children on reduced wages.
- 74-year-old two-time breast cancer survivor who is still working and supports herself on \$7,200 per year.
- Day laborer who is living in his car. Available work has been greatly reduced during the pandemic.
- 67-year-old woman with breast cancer and metastasis. Her only support comes from her son who is unable to find consistent employment.



Transitioning to a Post-COVID-19 World Through a Mix of Virtual & Onsite Care

When the pandemic hit, onsite visits temporarily dropped to zero, except for dental emergencies and a handful of other services that could only happen in person. We developed safety protocols to protect our staff, volunteers, and patients while transitioning to virtual appointments for most of our care. Despite the challenges, we have provided nearly 3,000 virtual visits to date and see enormous on-going potential of telehealth for our patients and volunteers—even beyond the pandemic.

To supplement our telehealth care, we started giving some of our providers the option to see patients onsite again last fall during small, carefully coordinated clinic sessions. Patients began coming back in for pulmonology, dermatology, and rheumatology visits—as well as preventive

screenings like pap smears. All the while, we have continued to expand the number of volunteers trained to provide care via telehealth and enhance patients' ability to effectively utilize virtual care through education and technology access.

Thanks to the vaccine, AFC is looking forward to its transition to a post-COVID-19 world, but instead of simply returning to our pre-COVID model, we anticipate that our "new normal" will integrate fresh practices and lessons learned from the pandemic along with many of the tried-and-true methods that have served us so well for 27 years.

There will be numerous factors to consider, such as: Which conditions and patients are best suited for onsite care? How quickly do we increase the number of patients without

sacrificing quality? How do we support technology use by our patients in ways that improve their health and minimize time away from their jobs and families? How do we safely maximize the use of our dental clinic?

We're planning for an integrated virtual and onsite model that will thrive post-COVID. Establishing telehealth as an on-going care-delivery platform will allow us to expand capacity and better retain and recruit volunteers. An integrated model, able to nimbly shift between telehealth and in-person care in response to the virus' presence in our community, will be key to a post-COVID-19 AFC.

"A year ago, we were living in fear of COVID-19 - locked down, overwhelmed by mounting unknowns, and washing our groceries. While COVID is still very much with us, so is the vaccine. Volunteering at AFC's vaccine clinic is an incredibly joyful experience. I truly love playing a small part in an incredibly effective, efficient, and safe process that is protecting individual lives and our community."

- Paula Potts, Registration & Check-In Volunteer



Recognizing Jim Cole, President & CEO of Virginia Hospital Center, Friend of AFC

After more than 30 years, Jim Cole, President & CEO of Virginia Hospital Center (VHC), will be retiring this fall. During his tenure, Jim has led the Hospital's transformation from a small community facility to an award-winning medical center, nationally recognized for clinical excellence and outstanding patient care. He should be commended for the many accolades that VHC has earned under his direction—as well as for the culture of giving and volunteerism at the Hospital, fostered under his leadership, including a deep support of AFC.



Jim has always been totally supportive of AFC and was an active board member in the mid-nineties. From VHC's initial gift of \$150,000 in donated lab tests and x-rays (what made it possible for AFC to begin providing care out of Thomas Jefferson Middle School in 1994), Jim has increased VHC's commitment each year—nowadays, VHC gives several million dollars in diagnostics and treatment annually! In addition to the abundant in-kind support, Jim also made sure that the Hospital financially contributed through the purchase of a premium table at the Gala each year. He always attended.

More recently, Jim generously offered to bring AFC onto Epic, VHC's electronic health record, at the Hospital's expense. Combined with his facilitation of a high-speed internet connection between VHC and AFC, this will ensure smooth communication between healthcare professionals and lead to even better outcomes.

Thanks to Jim Cole's leadership, our low-income neighbors have access to the same high-quality healthcare that all of us enjoy—regardless of their ability to pay. We wish Jim a happy, well-deserved retirement and congratulate him on an amazing legacy: a healthier Arlington for *everyone*.

Linking Social Factors to Health in Arlington— Collaborative Grant Year Three

In March we got our LINK team (the four clinics caring for Arlington's underserved population: AFC, VHC Outpatient Clinic, VHC Pediatrics, and Arlington County DHS Maternal & Child Health) together to discuss our third year of collaboration. This year's grant will focus on creating systems change to improve community conditions that contribute to poor health.

Thanks to Northern Virginia Health Foundation (which has funded our partnership since 2019) we've collected

important patient data on social determinants of health such as food, housing, safety, and—more recently—technology access/literacy. There is a lot going on in Arlington now related to food security (including a newly hired County Food Security Coordinator) and digital access. Over the coming year, the LINK partners will be working on projects that address both important topics, as well as working to make our providers more aware of social determinants of health as key health indicators.

Amazon Marks Two-Year Anniversary of Arlington Headquarters with \$250K Donation

Happy anniversary to our neighbor Amazon, who recently marked the occasion with \$9M in donations to local nonprofits, including a very generous \$250K contribution to Arlington Free Clinic. AFC is grateful to Amazon for recognizing the enormous challenges that nonprofits are facing right now and responding in such a significant way.

The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a lowercase, sans-serif font with a curved arrow underneath it pointing from the letter 'a' to the letter 'z'.

"Watching the news and reading about how the pandemic continues to destroy black, brown, and indigenous communities is disheartening. Over the past year, my best friend lost her father and close friends lost loved ones unexpectedly. I spent sleepless nights away from my parents and sisters hoping that they were okay (they are essential workers and had to be at work around others).

When I learned that AFC was approved to host vaccination clinics, I signed up immediately. My favorite part of the day was a patient who, before he left, thanked me for being there on a Saturday. He said he was grateful that the whole team took the time to help other people on the weekend."

— Elizabeth Escovar, Vaccine Interpreter



In Gratitude to the Sharon McGowan Breast Health Fund

The Sharon McGowan Breast Health Fund (SMBHF) was established in 1997 by the Arlington County Medical Society Foundation and the McGowan Family in memory of Sharon McGowan, an Arlington mother of seven, who died at age 45 after battling breast cancer. The fund supports mammograms and biopsies for uninsured patients (including those AFC serves) fighting breast cancer in Northern Virginia.

For 20 years the SMBHF has been sustained by the community through annual events, private donations, and support from the Arlington County Medical Society. Committee volunteers; the McGowan, Shapiro, Gropper, and Koch families; and the Yorktown High School Softball Boosters have all come together over two decades to honor the memory of Sharon McGowan through support of this mission.

This spring, the Arlington County Medical Society Foundation generously bestowed the Fund to Arlington Free Clinic, where it will continue to make a vital impact on breast health among our underserved neighbors.

SAVE THE DATES

The Power of Pink Hybrid Events - October 7, 2021



To honor her sister, Jill Beam Kough, a two-time breast cancer survivor, Karen Beam Leder started the Power of Pink. Many women diagnosed with breast cancer (including those AFC serves) do not have the resources or support that Jill had—the Power of Pink was started to help these women.

During these uncertain times, this year's event will be hybrid. Workout and wellness events will be held virtually—as well as indoors/outdoors in Bethesda, MD. Following the workouts and wellness programs, participants will enjoy an outside luncheon.

Since 2015, the Power of Pink has raised nearly \$200K for Arlington Free Clinic's breast health program. Register or donate at: <http://bit.ly/powerofpink21>

Arlington Free Clinic's Annual Hybrid Benefit Gala - October 23, 2021

Because our patients still need us, and we need you.

Cristin Finkle & Kathy Martin - 2021 Benefit Gala Co-Chairs
Pepper & Randy Binner - 2021 Special Gifts Chairs

Proceeds from our Annual Benefit Gala consistently generate 1/4 of our annual operating costs. Thank you for your continued support!

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AFC's vital care continues...



AFC's team of COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic volunteers.

Maria

I worked in a restaurant—in the kitchen. At the start of the pandemic, they let us all go.

I'm the primary bread winner for my four daughters back in El Salvador. From thousands of miles away, I followed news of the virus as it came to my community back home—the small town where my girls live. Thankfully, they were able to keep it from spreading too much because everyone came together and followed the quarantine restrictions.

In the beginning, I was able to cobble together parttime work so I could send some money to them and also cover my rent and other basic needs. But about seven months into the pandemic, my world turned upside down again, this time in the hospital where an MRI indicated pancreatic cancer.

For over a year now, families—even those lucky enough to be living in the same

town—have been separated by the virus. Being so far away from my daughters has never been harder, but I told them not to worry or be sad because I was in very good hands. And that's the truth: Arlington Free Clinic lined up everything so I could see specialists; have access to a long, complicated operation; and be followed closely throughout my recovery. They even connected me to a program that provides rental assistance—and because I had help, I was able to stretch my resources and continue to help my girls.

When I received the vaccine in March, I felt extremely relieved. My partner is finally back to work in a restaurant. Before I got the vaccine, he was constantly worried about getting me sick. To have had great treatment for my cancer *and* to be vaccinated—gratitude doesn't even begin to describe my feelings!

