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Congratulations to our Move to Health challenge completers!

## Congratulations 'Move to Health' Champions

All our lives we hear how important it is to exercise, have diets low in fat and carbohydrates, and make our plates colorful with vegetables. It's hard for those of us with time and resources to hold a gym membership and plan healthy meals to practice these good habits. Arlington Free Clinic's patients are almost universally balancing tremendous work and family responsibilities on extremely tight budgets with little chance to catch their breath. It's hard to fault someone for being unable to muster the energy to exercise after spending a back-breaking day working a construction site or cleaning homes. Acknowledging that we can't simply prescribe "healthy choices" to patients for whom it's hardly a matter of choice at all, for the past several years, AFC has been developing a program called "Move to Health" to support our patients' progress in practical and realistic ways.

AFC had been offering highly attended group exercise classes in our conference room twice a week. Patients were showing up after a long day at work, bringing their children, and building community and accountability. Then the pandemic hit, putting a halt to group gatherings, and threatening to dampen the great momentum we had achieved.

Our wonderful volunteers quickly rallied to keep the exercise classes alive via Zoom. We recently celebrated with some of our patients who met our challenge of attending at least four Zoom exercise classes during the month of February. Eight women went above and beyond, with some attending up to eight!

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# Integrated Healthcare at AFC

Unique to Arlington Free Clinic's approach is our holistic model of not only medical care, but also behavioral health support, medications, dental – even access to resources “beyond the exam room” like assistance with food and rent – all under one roof.

Our model opens a world of opportunity for enhancing care, by coordinating and integrating services rather than simply co-locating these services. A great example of the benefits of integrated care is prevention/early detection of conditions that have strong linkages across healthcare disciplines, such as diabetes and gum disease. Collaborative practice is highly regarded as effective and is a model whose promise we will work to maximize at AFC over the coming year – in particular, through the integration of primary care with our dental and mental health programs.

## Medical-Dental Integration

While AFC has had an onsite dental clinic since 2019, our challenge is to move beyond co-location and truly integrate. Over the coming year, we plan to take full advantage of the proximity of our dental and medical providers – educating volunteers, staff, and patients about the importance of oral health and how closely it is connected to overall health, particularly for those with chronic diseases. We're adding blood pressure screenings to every dental appointment to improve early identification of hypertensive patients and are including questions related to oral health history

during the medical intake process.

We recently joined a learning collaborative hosted by the Virginia Health Catalyst, a coalition working to ensure Virginians have equitable access to comprehensive care that includes oral health. We will take what we learn from the Catalyst's integration experts and our peer clinics who are wrestling with similar challenges to expand and enhance our approach to integrating our dental and medical services with the goal of improving health outcomes for our patients.

## Medical-Mental Health Integration

Over half of AFC patients screen positive for issues related to mental health or a history of trauma. Many have anxiety or depression, often the result of having experienced violence or trauma that impairs their ability to manage their overall health, care for themselves or their family, and contribute to their community.

Wait times for new mental health consults average 4 months, resulting in deteriorating health status and risk of loss-to-follow-up. While we're always working to recruit new mental health volunteers, AFC's model provides a unique opportunity for us to maximize the use of primary care providers. Since PCPs prescribe most of the antidepressants in the US, these clinicians are well-



Joan Bowes Ritter, MD

suited to identify and treat behavioral health issues. We aim to give our PCPs additional tools to successfully address many of our patients' mental health needs and increase our team's ability to distinguish between patients who truly need a mental health referral and those who are experiencing episodic symptoms that could be managed in primary care. This will increase access to timely, appropriate mental healthcare and reduce unnecessary psychiatric referrals, preserving this limited clinical resource for cases that require this level of care.

Through AFC's efforts to better integrate our dental and mental health programs with primary care, we aim to expand the high-quality, comprehensive care that we deliver to our 1,500 low-income, uninsured patients, and push ourselves to pursue highly innovative ideas with the potential for significant and sustained impact.

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We thought we understood the barriers our patients faced along their paths to better health, but we didn't anticipate what an eye-opening experience it would be having a literal lens into their lives. Patients went to great lengths to attend classes – often racing in from their jobs as the class was in session. A few were caring

for small children while trying to exercise, providing great levity to class, and adding additional weight to the ladies' bridge poses. Other family members would join in for a few jumping jacks while passing through the room before moving on. Family pets also added comic relief.

Now that the days are longer and the weather is warmer, we will be holding classes outdoors on the lawn of the Walter Reed Community Center. The coaches and patients are all looking forward to being face to face once again.

# Inspiring Gift Helps AFC Dream Big

We are very happy to share the news of a most generous \$250,000 gift Arlington Free Clinic has received from longtime volunteer, gala fundraiser, and board member Diane Naughton and her husband Tim. Diane reached out with the news toward the end of the year as she was wrapping up her most recent term on the board. Tim had just announced his retirement from AvalonBay Communities, Inc. as its CEO. Their plans for the future were taking shape and included spending more time in Charlottesville near their beloved alma mater, UVA. And so, Diane—after more than a decade of volunteer

leadership at AFC—was also going to be stepping into new roles.

“We wanted to do something significant to support the Clinic in celebration of Tim’s retirement, as well as my stepping down from Board leadership at AFC,” shared Diane.

As amazing as their gift was, that wasn’t all. AvalonBay would be matching the Naughtons’ gift with its own \$250,000 contribution in honor of Tim’s leadership. Tim’s company has a long history of support of AFC through donations, Gala

sponsorships, and hundreds of employee and resident volunteer hours. What a wonderful tribute to Tim, whose legacy includes both visionary leadership and a commitment to building a culture of philanthropy at his company.

The Naughtons’ and AvalonBay’s combined \$500,000 investment will support Arlington Free Clinic’s mental health program. The Naughtons have always been impressed by the holistic way AFC approaches care—if a patient needs help managing their diabetes, support for anxiety around a family situation, nutrition counseling to lose weight, even help with jobs, housing, and groceries, it’s all here at the Clinic. But, shared Diane, “we decided to focus on AFC’s mental health program as we knew how much the need had increased during COVID. Our patients have so many challenges already.”

Beyond the direct impact on the mental health needs of our patients at this critical time, the Naughtons’ gift has inspired us to consider what we might accomplish by offering donors the opportunity to make impactful, program-specific investments in areas of greatest need. Stay tuned for updates as we prepare to dream big.



Diane & Tim Naughton as AFC's 20th Anniversary Gala Special Gifts Chairs

## Linking Social Factors to Health in Arlington: Collaborative Grant Year Four

Our LINK team (the four clinics providing healthcare to Arlington’s underserved residents: AFC, VHC Outpatient Clinic, VHC Pediatrics, and Arlington County DHS Maternal & Child Health) was recently approved for a fourth year of funding.

Since 2019, Northern Virginia Health Foundation has funded us to collect social determinants of health data, such as food, housing, safety, and technology access, from our shared patient population. Not

only has this helped grant partners better understand and mitigate the barriers our patients face, but it’s enabled our effective advocacy on behalf of our patients to community leaders with the power to make lasting, systems-level change.

This year, LINK partners are focusing on integration of social determinants of health data into patients’ electronic health records (EHR) so that all care providers can be aware of the various factors—such

as access to food and shelter—that can influence health outcomes. This work is already underway in collaboration with VHC’s Epic EHR team, and we are optimistic about Arlington County’s plans for a new electronic health record system that will support the collection and use of this critical data. We are appreciative of Northern Virginia Health Foundation’s support of this innovative work which allows us to address many of the factors that can influence the health of our patients.



# Volunteer Snapshot: AFC's Scribes

In October, Arlington Free Clinic transitioned to a new electronic health record (EHR), Epic, a gift from our partner hospital, VHC Health (formerly Virginia Hospital Center), who generously brought us onto their Epic license at no cost to AFC—and provided training, equipment, and support to ensure our successful conversion. Under our former EHR, any staff or volunteer involved in patient care could access and update records, but Epic requires that all users complete several hours of training and pass an exam. Our providers typically

volunteer during one three-hour shift per month—not frequently enough to keep Epic skills current even after all the training! We worked with Lackey Clinic, our sister free clinic in Yorktown – that was successfully using Epic in conjunction with a robust volunteer scribe program for several years – to develop a similar model at AFC.

We reached out to current volunteers and several local university pre-medicine and pre-health professions programs with our plans and were overwhelmed by the interest! Our first cohort of scribes started in July 2021 by attending weekly trainings with AFC staff to learn, first and foremost, how to correctly document a medical encounter. They also studied medical terminology, phrasing, and acronyms, and completed formal training on how to use Epic. They were up and scribing by mid-October. We began a similar process with cohort 2 in September, and 12 weeks later they were also actively supporting providers. We ask the scribes to commit to a regular weekly shift for one year with the option to renew – though we know that many of our scribes are in the process of applying to medical school or residency programs. We are thrilled when they're unable to renew due to acceptance!

## SCRIBE PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

### Number of volunteer scribes:

18 active & 2 in reserve

### Average volunteer hours per scribe

(not including training): 33.25

### Total hours volunteered:

631

### Providers assisted:

34

### Patient appointments:

550

### WHERE THEY'RE HEADED NEXT:

### Number of scribes matched for residencies:

1

### Number of scribes accepted to medical school:

2 and counting!

## MEET THE SCRIBES



Ava Afshar



Daana Bajnauth



Jack Banas



Brad Clemens



Derek Dye



Julia Gillan



Yafiet Gojela



Cindy Le



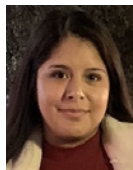
Myra Lewontin



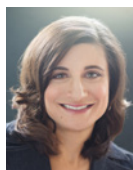
Amy Lin



Quan Lu



Ashley Euceda Mendoza



Syril Pettit



Kavary Nivana Theethira Poonacha



Gricelda Ramirez



Lyudmyla Susla



Peyton Yee



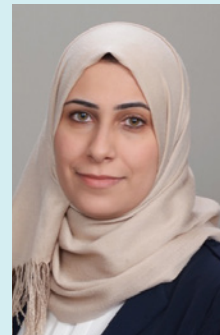
Anna Zdunek



Michael Zhu

## Meet Israa Najeeb, MD:

Most expect the path to becoming a doctor to be long and challenging, but for Dr. Najeeb the road has been rockier and more winding than most – interrupted by war, first in her home country of Iraq and then in the border region between Libya and Tunisia to which she fled seeking refuge. She is a proud graduate of the Tripoli Faculty of Medicine in Libya where she also completed a cardiology fellowship, but the traditional career trajectory that should have followed – of residency and practice – was disrupted by 18 months spent living in a refugee camp before her immigration to the US was finally approved.



Once here, she began the years' long process of preparing for and taking the USMLE (the three-step test you must pass before you can apply for a medical license) and completing clinical rotations at US institutions to make her residency application competitive.

As she was busy completing her final rotation, she was selected to join the first cohort of AFC's new scribe program. Of her experience she shared that "sometimes life takes you on different path from where you thought you wanted to be—in my case, away from cardiology and toward becoming a primary care provider delivering free healthcare to immigrants and refugees. As a refugee, I experienced what it was like trying to access medical care without resources or language skills. Then at AFC, I was able to witness the impact of quality care on patients facing similar challenges—now this is my new goal."

March 18th was "2022 Match Day," the day that aspiring physicians who survived medical school, completed clinical rotations, passed their board exams—and in Dr. Najeeb's case, persevered through war, refugee camps, and cross-continental immigration—learned if they had been offered a coveted spot in a residency program. We couldn't be happier to be losing Dr. Najeeb to UM Capital Region Medical Center come July. We're very happy that she's staying in the area to serve the patients of the DMV and look forward to welcoming her back as a volunteer physician someday!

## Passing the Baton

In 2005, three staff joined Arlington Free Clinic, all within a couple months of each other – and this past year, 17 years later, they all retired within months of one another, too. During their time at AFC, Jody Steiner Kelly, Coralie Miller, and Sheila Ryan—our Directors of Clinical Administration, HR & Finance, and Clinical Services, respectively—led our organization in achieving transformative programmatic and operational growth. They championed AFC's early adoption of a modest electronic health record (EHR) allowing us to safely store and monitor important trends in patient data, and when we outgrew it, led our transition to a new, state-of-the-art EHR called Epic a decade later. They drove our evolution from a small-but-mighty staff of 17 to a diverse, professional, and highly effective team of 45—from a budget of \$1.5M to one that's more than double that this year. Impactful programs like social services case management, our patient-centered medical home model, and our dental program were established and became the keystones of our care under their visionary leadership.

As we were turning the corner with the pandemic and beginning to catch glimpses of hope for a return to normalcy, one after another, these AFC institutions shared their plans to retire (they'd already delayed plans that

had been forming until we got through the worst of COVID). The prospect of losing a collective 51 years of expertise, institutional knowledge, and relationships was daunting to say the least. Luckily, there's a tradition of "failed retirements" at Arlington Free Clinic – almost everyone who tries to retire extends their end date, contracts back for a period to ease the transition, or both. I'm grateful for the flexibility and true partnership with which these three similarly approached their departures.

Although it was hard to imagine several months back, thanks to the strong foundation built under their leadership, the important work of AFC surges ahead as we "pass the baton" to new colleagues who will take our work forward. The fun, compassion, and dedication that Coralie, Jody, and Sheila brought to their work has left a lasting mark on the organization and continues to inspire us all.



Nancy White, President



Jody Steiner Kelly



Coralie Miller



Sheila Ryan

## SAVE THE DATE

### Arlington Free Clinic's Annual Benefit Gala - October 15, 2022

*We will be monitoring the situation carefully, but we are hoping for an in-person event!*

Cristin Finkel & Kathy Martin - 2022 Benefit Gala Chairs

Mike & Maeve Ward - 2022 Special Gifts Chairs

Proceeds from our Annual Benefit Gala consistently generate 1/4 of our annual operating costs. Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to celebrating with you!

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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MPH

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As the need continues,  
so does the important work of AFC.

**Make a difference with a gift  
before 6/30/22 and help us  
finish our fiscal year strong!**

## Arlington's Guarantee Pilot: Unconditional Cash for Families in Need

Arlington Free Clinic recently provided a sample of AFC patient families with children—from which twelve names were drawn to participate in "Arlington's Guarantee," an initiative of the Arlington Community Foundation in partnership with Arlington County Department of Human Services. This pilot is an effort to identify new methods for addressing severe poverty and to prevent our low-income neighbors from being displaced from Arlington. In this initiative, 200 low-income families are receiving an unrestricted \$500/month over an 18-month period, without an impact on their eligibility for other important State or County programs that have income limits (such as low-income housing).

In giving families the power to confront financial needs as they choose (e.g., to pay off debt, fix a car, attend a training program, build emergency savings, or meet other needs), Arlington's Guarantee is part of the growing national movement of guaranteed income pilots that support equity, dignity, and belonging for our most vulnerable and historically marginalized neighbors. In these pilots, participants have experienced a significant decrease in anxiety and depression, an increase in full employment and academic milestones, and the breathing room to save for emergencies and medical bills. Over time, the Foundation expects to see these same effects amongst the Arlington participants.

It's amazing to hear from our AFC families participating in this program. In just the first months of receiving this new income, one AFC patient who is a single mother shared how it's allowed her to "catch up" on basic needs following two years of COVID-related reductions in her income. She shared with our staff what a tremendous relief it has been for her to once again be able to purchase clothing and other essential items for her children.

*Learn more about this important pilot here: [www.arlcf.org/arlingtons-guarantee](http://www.arlcf.org/arlingtons-guarantee)*