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The Launching & Evolution of a Volunteer-Driven Free Clinic

The initial spark for Arlington Free Clinic came in 1993 when, at the urging of Dr. Archie McPherson - the new Arlington County Medical Society (ACMS) president - Dr. Joseph Backer took charge of the sub-committee focused on helping community members without insurance who needed healthcare.

Up until that point, the ACMS had kept a list of local doctors who agreed to see patients free of charge, but what they could offer - just a single visit - was quite limited, and without access to lab work or necessary follow-up care, patients would soon be on their own again.

Drawing inspiration from the small handful of free clinics that were beginning to crop up across the state, Dr. Backer and his steering committee secured free after-hours use of the hallways and nurses office of Thomas Jefferson Middle School - the Clinic's home for its first four years; hired an Executive Director - who agreed to serve in a volunteer capacity until funds for her salary could be raised; and won a promise of free labs and diagnostics from Arlington Hospital (now VHC Health) - whose partnership and pro bono support would grow year over year for the next three decades.



A view of the check-in desk at AFC's first home in Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

In those early days of makeshift space and a reliance on pharmaceutical company samples for medications, resources were scarce. But fueled by the sheer determination of its volunteers, AFC expanded in scope and impact. In response to increasing patient numbers and needs, what began as a modest endeavor focused on primary care soon grew into a comprehensive healthcare home. Showcasing the Clinic's adaptability and willingness to embrace new opportunities, services like specialty medicine, optometry, physical therapy, and mental healthcare were added - all thanks to volunteers.

AFC's 30-year journey underscores the power of volunteers and the profound impact that a dedicated group of individuals can have on their community. As we celebrate the milestones achieved and the lives touched, we look to the future with the same spirit of resilience and compassion that has guided us to this point.



Empowering AFC Patients Through Comprehensive Orthopedic Care

“Danny’s” journey (read the full story below) shows how Arlington Free Clinic’s volunteer orthopedic specialists came together to evaluate one patient’s unique needs and provide the tools necessary to reignite possibilities he believed were lost after his accident.

AFC’s impact extends beyond individual cases such as “Danny’s” thanks to the support of an extensive pro bono network that encompasses a spectrum of orthopedic and related services. From initial assessments and surgeries to post-operative care and physical therapy, AFC ensures a holistic approach to rehabilitation.

A significant portion of our patients are employed in physically demanding industries such as construction, landscaping, and caregiving. As a result, they often present at AFC with acute work-related injuries such as fractures and sprains, or conditions stemming from chronic overuse like carpal tunnel syndrome and tendonitis. Despite the crucial nature of their jobs, these individuals are among the least equipped with protections against workplace injuries or support when incidents occur.

The generous network of specialists and practices to the right enables us to bridge this gap effectively, while also managing a range of orthopedic needs related to normal aging or sequelae of chronic disease. From orthopedic cancer treatment and care for osteoarthritis to knee replacements and rehabilitation, together with our partners, we are offering AFC patients the healthcare necessary to overcome their challenges and thrive.

CLINICIAN PARTNERS

Gordon Avery, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon
Anthony Avery, MD – Knee & Shoulder Surgeon/
Sports Medicine
Daniel Cuttica, DO – Foot & Ankle Surgeon
John Hattingh, CP, CPO(SA), LPO, MSc – Prosthetist
Irene Hruskoci, PT – Physical Therapist
William Petersen, MD – Hip & Knee Surgeon
David Romness, MD – Joint Replacement Surgeon
Cassie Root, MD – Elbow, Forearm, Wrist &
Hand Surgeon
Kevin Sumida, MD – Knee & Shoulder Surgeon
Felasfa Wodajo, MD – Orthopedic Surgeon

PRACTICE PARTNERS

Body Dynamics, Inc.
Nirschl Orthopaedic Center
OrthoVirginia
VHC Health:

- Epic Leaders & IS PACS Administrator
- Outpatient Orthopedic Clinic
- Outpatient Rehabilitation
- Radiology



PATIENT STORY

Danny’s Journey

Overcoming Obstacles, Embracing Opportunities

In August 2018, “Danny’s” life took an unexpected turn when a motorcycle accident resulted in the loss of his leg above the knee at the young age of 20. Despite facing such a daunting challenge, Danny’s resilience and determination have been nothing short of remarkable.

The Shirlington Employment and Education Center (SEEC), a local organization that helps day laborers find employment, had been attempting to assist Danny in repairing his prosthetic leg – which had become ill-fitting and painful to the point that he had given up on wearing it in favor of crutches. Unable to

A Legacy that Lasts: Mark & Rozanne Silverwood

Arlington Free Clinic was founded 30 years ago by dedicated physicians with a vision for a healthier Arlington for everyone, and it has continued to operate with the generous support of the medical community. But the contributions of Mark and Rozanne Silverwood underscore the fact that people of all backgrounds - and a heart for increasing access to healthcare - can make a significant impact on the lives of our neighbors.

When Mark joined the Board of Directors in the mid-2000s, he initially questioned his role as a businessperson amongst a slate of medical professionals. However, he quickly found his niche in utilizing his business acumen to aid the Clinic's growth. At a crucial juncture when the Clinic was outgrowing its leased space, the Board played a pivotal role in negotiating a new home. This involved securing a free condominium as part of a deal with the developer who intended to

convert our block into mixed residential and commercial space. From there, Mark played a crucial role in leveraging his expertise to facilitate meetings with architects, secure favorable contracts with builders, and ultimately, translate the Clinic's vision into reality.

As Mark's board service approached its end, he and his wife, Rozanne, took proactive steps to ensure their continued support for the Clinic's future. Through careful estate arrangements, they solidified a transformational gift by designating AFC as a beneficiary in their plans, recognizing the Clinic's vital role in the community and their desire to see its impact endure.

For the Silverwoods, giving isn't just a one-time act but a lifelong commitment. From Mark's invaluable contributions as a board member, to their ongoing annual support through our Gala, to their impactful legacy gift, their story is a reminder that philanthropy isn't confined to a single moment but is woven into the fabric of everyday life. As Mark and Rozanne continue to give generously, they hope to inspire others to join them in ensuring all Arlingtonians have access to the healthcare they need to thrive.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone or tablet's camera to learn more about how you can leave a lasting legacy at AFC!



find an affordable prosthetic clinic, SEEC referred Danny to AFC where he was seen promptly by Dr. Felasfa Wodajo, a volunteer orthopedic oncologist/surgeon. Dr. Wodajo quickly joined Danny's care team to assess what would be involved in fixing the existing prosthesis, but ultimately referred Danny to his colleague John Hattingh, a skilled prosthetist, who provided him with a brand-new prosthetic leg.

During a follow-up appointment to assess Danny's adjustment to his new prosthesis, Hattingh surprised Danny by offering him a custom-made running blade, a curved-shaped prosthetic limb made of carbon fiber used by amputee runners. This gesture left Danny speechless: he had shared during a prior appointment that he used to be a runner, and Hattingh's gift inspired him to sign up and begin training for his first marathon scheduled for the fall in DC.

But Danny's journey didn't end with acquiring his new prostheses. Recognizing the importance of mobility in Danny's life, AFC's staff team, including our Community Resource Navigator Emely

Marchena and Family Nurse Practitioner Terry McManus, began assisting him in obtaining a driver's license. Through their efforts and connections with the Driver Rehabilitation Center of Excellence (DRCE), an organization Terry is himself familiar with as a person living with paraplegia, Danny received a generous discount on the necessary evaluation and training to safely operate a vehicle - he passed his DMV road test in April.

Within just a couple of weeks of trading in his crutches for a new prosthetic leg, Danny secured a job in a local restaurant. Previously, every opportunity seemed to vanish when employers tried to envision him working on crutches. With his newfound independence, Danny is not only able to work but also live a life of freedom and empowerment.

Scan QR code with your smartphone or tablet's camera to read about AFC's commitment to ethical storytelling:



Using the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) to Inform Care



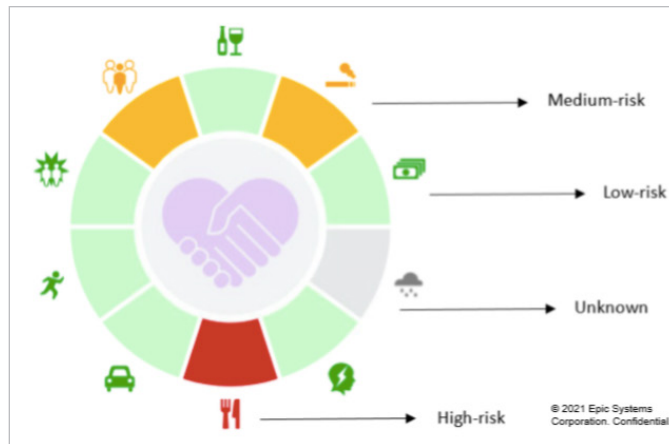
Joan Bowes Ritter, MD

It has always been part of the model at Arlington Free Clinic to be tuned in and responsive to the non-medical needs of our patients. From our very early days, it was part of the role of a nurse manager at AFC to listen for needs “beyond the exam room” and do what you could to alleviate by offering resources for supplemental food or eviction assistance, for example, in between blood pressure readings and flu shots.

In 2018, we embarked on a significant shift towards addressing our patients’ SDOH needs in a more systematic and intentional way. Thanks to the support of Northern Virginia Health Foundation, a collaborative effort was established between Arlington Free Clinic, the VHC Health Outpatient Clinic, Neighborhood Health Pediatrics (formerly VHC Health Pediatrics), and Arlington County DHS Maternal & Child Health. Together, these partner clinics developed a SDOH screening tool that has enabled us to collect and analyze deidentified data on our patients’ non-medical needs, and use this information to advocate for enduring, systemic changes that promote the broader health and well-being of our community. To make this information accessible for patient care, VHC Health and AFC worked to bring the SDOH screening tool into our shared EHR system (Epic).

This year marks a pivotal moment as we leverage the integration of our SDOH screening tool in Epic to give clinicians easy access to information regarding patients’ social needs. Previously, our EHR did not incorporate patients’ responses to questions related to financial concerns, transportation barriers, housing instability, and food insecurity - or areas such as physical activity levels and social connections. With this vital information now embedded in the EHR, it can be readily accessed to inform clinicians’ evaluations of patients’ whole-health needs and guide the development of more patient-centered plans of care.

While our clinicians have always been aware of the impact of non-medical factors on their patients’ health, easier access to this information allows them to see a more complete picture - and actively engage in collecting and utilizing the information. Furthermore, the integration of this data into Epic facilitates its sharing beyond the walls of AFC to encompass all members of a patient’s care team, whether at VHC or any other Epic facility where care is provided. This fosters continuity and maximizes the impact of our efforts to address SDOH within our community.



- Alcohol Use
- Tobacco Use
- Financial Resource Strain
- Depression
- Stress
- Food Insecurity
- Transportation Needs
- Physical Activity
- Social Connections

“This year marks a pivotal moment as we leverage the integration of our SDOH screening tool in Epic to give clinicians easy access to information regarding patients’ social needs.”



Lesley Daigle: Reflecting on my First 90 Days as CEO

As I approach my 90-day mark at Arlington Free Clinic, I am filled with immense pride to lead this amazing organization during its 30th Anniversary year! We have achieved full staffing, which is remarkable for any healthcare provider, and we are seeing the results of purposeful integration of our varied patient services. Notably, our dental clinic is bustling with around 250 visits per month, and we can now schedule psychiatry appointments within a week of referral. As I look to our shared goals for the year - raising awareness about AFC in the community, strengthening partnerships to address the non-medical needs of the people we serve, and adapting to the ever-changing landscape of charitable giving - I am inspired by the profound legacy entrusted to me.

First, while support for AFC is deep and wide thanks to so many supporters, partners, funders, and volunteers, there are still many in the community who remain unaware of our vital work. With the events surrounding our 30th Anniversary year, we are determined to spread the word and showcase the great impact of our staff and volunteers.

As we raise awareness about AFC, we also aim to establish those critical connections within the broader safety-net in Arlington. Recognizing the significant impact of non-medical factors on overall well-being, we are committed to addressing the holistic needs of our patients. Our goal is to continue to gain insight into these needs through enhanced screenings and other outreach and to strengthen partnerships that improve the welfare of our patients.

Finally, the philanthropic funding world is constantly evolving, requiring AFC to remain agile and responsive. With 90% of our support coming from private sources, we are deeply grateful for the trust and generosity of our donors. A commitment to transparency and impact will continue to guide our efforts as we demonstrate to supporters how their investments in AFC make a meaningful difference in our patients' lives and foster a healthier community.

From where I stand 90 days into my tenure, I see that AFC has a unique opportunity to promote the health and well-being of the people we serve while advocating for their broader needs. I thank you for engaging with our work and for all you do to invest in AFC's vital mission!



Lesley Daigle, CEO

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SAVE THE DATE
OCTOBER 19, 2024

Celebrating Resiliency

ARLINGTON FREE CLINIC
30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

GALA CHAIR: DAWN BROKSAS
SPECIAL GIFTS CHAIRS: DOUG & CASSIE ROOT

Design by Winking Fish



As the need continues,
so does the important work of AFC.
**Make a difference with a gift
before 6/30/24 and help us
finish our fiscal year strong!**

AFC's Commitment to Expanding Access to Oral Healthcare

In 2021, 28% of AFC's medical patients engaged in dental care. Of those dental patients, only 30% completed their treatment plans. Recognizing an opportunity for improvement, we embarked on a multi-year vision to enhance integration between our medical and dental programs and devise effective strategies to mitigate treatment barriers.

The dedicated efforts towards achieving these goals yielded exciting results: by 2023, we had seen a near doubling of medical patient engagement with our oral health program coupled with a significant increase in dental treatment plan completion rates!

Looking ahead, the next phase of our vision for dental at AFC involves integrating innovative technology - including a recently acquired intraoral scanner - and forging new partnerships with mission-aligned labs to bring down costs. Additionally, we are committed to adopting sustainable fee practices and bolstering resources to meet the growing demand. This strategic approach aims to further elevate the quality and accessibility of dental care at AFC, reinforcing the recognition of oral health as an integral component of comprehensive healthcare.

