

SPRING 2025

arlingtonfreeclinic

INSIDE

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:
AFC's Interpreters

Leveraging Data
and Community
Partnerships to
Address Social
Determinants of
Health (SDOH)

DONOR SPOTLIGHT:
Arlington
Women's
Civic Alliance

Your Support
Makes Our Work
Possible

VHC Health: Expanding Access to Care for a Healthier Arlington

More than 30 years ago, Arlington Free Clinic (AFC) formed a vital partnership with VHC Health (then Arlington Hospital), beginning with free labs and diagnostic services for our first patients at Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

Today, VHC Health remains a vital partner, donating thousands of tests, X-rays, procedures, and access to an electronic health record for AFC's 1,500+ patients annually.

This access ensures patients receive high-quality diagnostic services, critical for detecting cancer, heart disease, and other serious conditions. If a problem is identified, VHC Physician Group specialists donate their time and expertise for consultations, procedures, and even life-saving surgeries. However, their support goes beyond these donated services. VHC's Financial Aid office works closely with AFC's Case Manager, allowing us to submit charity care applications for patients, removing a major barrier for those with limited health literacy.

Additionally, AFC regularly accepts referrals from VHC Health, including patients recently discharged from the hospital who need ongoing intensive care for conditions like cancer, uncontrolled diabetes, and renal failure. Our team also works closely with VHC Health's Outpatient Clinic, which serves a similar patient population and often refers individuals in need of a comprehensive medical home or dental services.

Beyond their financial and in-kind support, VHC Health is also a strategic thought partner. Their CEO Chris Lane and AFC CEO Lesley Daigle meet regularly and engage in critical conversations about the future of healthcare in the region, ensuring both organizations are prepared to navigate any shifts in coverage and continue providing care to those in need.

This relationship between AFC and VHC Health is truly unique, setting a high standard for free and charitable clinics not only in Virginia but across the country. We are deeply grateful for VHC Health's unwavering support in ensuring that all Arlington residents have access to high-quality, comprehensive healthcare, regardless of their insurance status. Through our partnership, we will continue to promote community health, prevent illness, and ensure that unnecessary hospitalizations remain a last resort rather than a first line of care.



VHC Health CEO Chris Lane and AFC CEO Lesley Daigle continuing a 30-year partnership for a healthier Arlington

AFC Interpreters

At Arlington Free Clinic, high-quality, compassionate care goes beyond the medical services we provide. Clear communication is essential to delivering effective healthcare, and AFC's team of volunteer interpreters ensure that language is never a barrier to receiving care.

Our patients come from all over the world and speak more than 13 different primary languages, including Spanish, Mongolian, Amharic, and Arabic. Last year alone, AFC volunteer interpreters provided 1,949 hours of service, facilitating critical conversations between patients and providers. Their work is vital to helping patients fully understand their health and feel empowered in their decision-making, while also ensuring providers have accurate information to deliver the best possible care.

AFC is also committed to providing our interpreters with the tools and expertise necessary for interpreting in a healthcare setting. The vast majority of our volunteers are not professionals but rather bilingual members of our community who want to use their skills to help others. We have developed internal training materials to help volunteers feel confident interpreting in medical settings, including guidance on medical terminology and patient advocacy. Additionally, with the expertise of Kelly Henriquez from KGH Interpreting and funding from our CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield grant, we have conducted multiple trainings on the function and



ethics of healthcare interpreting with an emphasis on self-care, covering important topics such as vicarious trauma, burnout, compassion fatigue, and stress management.

We are deeply grateful for our volunteer interpreters, whose commitment to overcoming communication barriers makes Arlington Free Clinic a place where all patients feel heard, understood, and empowered.

Even with 73 dedicated interpreters, the need for interpreting support for approximately 1,500 patients far outpaces the capacity. Volunteer Spanish interpreters are one of our highest needs. Scan the QR code if you are interested in joining the program or learning more information.



Meet Maria Greene, one of AFC's volunteer interpreters!



For over a decade, Maria has been a steady, compassionate presence at Arlington Free Clinic. She has interpreted in a variety of roles, including primary care, intake, discharge, and eventually settling into physical therapy, where she and Irene Hruskoci, a longtime physical therapist, formed a dynamic duo until Irene's retirement last year. Maria's flexibility and commitment truly shone during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when she adapted to virtual telehealth visits. She recalls the unique challenges of that time – having to demonstrate physical therapy exercises and explain them clearly over video calls – yet she remained a reliable source of support for patients.

After Irene's retirement, Maria didn't miss a beat and seamlessly transitioned into interpreting for our gynecology clinics. But Maria didn't stop there. Always eager to grow and contribute in new ways, she recently began training as a volunteer scribe! Her dedication, adaptability, and heart are just a few of the reasons we are so grateful to have her as part of the AFC family.

"It is a big responsibility to facilitate the communication between a doctor and patient regarding their health. However, the reward is even greater when you witness someone's genuine appreciation for being heard, cared for, and healed. The meetings between doctor and patient are intimate and can be very emotional because you are dealing with a person's physical and mental well-being. One could argue that nothing is more important in life. This is why I feel so honored and grateful to be an AFC Spanish interpreter."

Leveraging Data and Community Partnerships to Address Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)



Joan Bowes Ritter, MD

At Arlington Free Clinic, we understand that health is shaped by more than just access to medical care. Social determinants of health—including income, education, housing, food security, and employment—play a critical role in shaping health outcomes.

One of AFC's key strategies for reducing health disparities is using data to inform our care delivery and program development. We collect and analyze data on patient demographics, health outcomes, and access to care to identify trends and gaps in service. Since the hiring of a new full-time clinical data specialist, AFC has increased our capacity for real-time data collection and monitoring. Additionally, grant funding from the Northern Virginia Health Foundation will support AFC and community partners—VHC Outpatient Clinic and the Public Health Division of the Arlington County

Department of Human Services—with the development of a customizable SDOH dashboard. This tool will allow these organizations to submit and visualize real-time data in a user-friendly dashboard. By monitoring and analyzing this information in real-time, we can better assess population-level needs, identify service gaps, and advocate for system-level change in our community.

Real-time SDOH data collection also allows AFC to leverage community partnerships to help meet patients' needs. For example, we have partnered with

Arlington Transportation (ART) to address transportation needs and distribute over 1,000 Smartrip cards to patients to cover public transportation expenses. This subsidized transit pass will be distributed to those who have identified transportation as a barrier through our SDOH screenings or in conversations with AFC's Community Resource Navigator. Additionally, this pilot will allow our patients the opportunity to provide ART with valuable feedback about public transportation in Arlington County.

By embracing data-driven, patient-centered strategies and expanding our community partnerships, AFC is strengthening our holistic model of care—one that acknowledges and addresses the social and systemic factors that impact health and well-being.

2024 Outcomes

Last year, we were able to provide:

9,736
clinical visits



5,852
medical visits
4,283 primary care
1,569 specialty care



2,813
dental
appointments

Arlington Women's Civic Alliance

We are pleased to announce that Arlington Women's Civic Alliance (AWCA), a local organization devoted to philanthropy in our community, selected AFC's Women's Health Program as the beneficiary of their 2025 Benefit event. Angie Wilcox, AWCA President, shared that the decision for the group was unanimous: "The impact of this program extends far beyond medical services; it provides hope, dignity, and the chance for a healthier future."

For over 30 years, Arlington Free Clinic's Women's Health Program has filled a vital gap in the community. Annually, this program provides essential care, breast and cervical cancer screenings, breast cancer survivorship groups, and education to approximately 1,000 women who would otherwise lack access to these important services. AFC holds up to four women's health clinics each month during which a team of volunteer physicians, nurse practitioners, and other professionals provide

Pap smears and clinical breast exams. Women who have an abnormal clinical breast exam are referred to VHC Health for a mammogram. In addition to diagnosis and treatment, AFC provides comprehensive services to navigate care. For example, we ensure patients are taking proper medications, remind them of appointments, and provide transportation to more advanced treatment or surgery if needed.

In addition to their generous financial contribution, the Arlington Women's Civic Alliance also collected grocery gift cards for our patients and are hosting a Mother's Day shop in May. We are incredibly grateful for these donations supporting both our patients and our Women's Health Program. With their support, Arlington Free Clinic will ensure that women in our community continue to receive these vital services for years to come.

"The women we serve at Arlington Free Clinic carry stories of courage beyond what most of us can imagine. It is a privilege to provide them with comprehensive, compassionate care."

— Dr. Laura Stone, one of our dedicated volunteer gynecology providers



Just some of the 63 AWCA members doing what they do best—supporting their community!



1,071
behavioral
health
appointments



1,511
vaccines administered



26,416
prescriptions dispensed
30-day equivalents



626
social services referrals
to community partners for "needs beyond the exam room",
including food, housing, employment, etc.

LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Your Support Makes Our Work Possible



Lesley Daigle, CEO

I hope this message finds you well. In January, I celebrated my first year as Arlington Free Clinic's CEO, which I can hardly believe. This past year has been marked by tremendous growth and a deep appreciation for the mission-driven work we do every day. Even after a year, I continue to be inspired by the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and donors who make our impact in the community possible.

Even before my arrival, AFC was approaching another inflection point in its evolution. I believe that to fulfill our mission of advancing health equity, we must not only strengthen our foundations but also remain active partners in Arlington's safety net, ensuring we understand and respond to the needs of our community. Our goal is to make strategic investments to elevate our programs, improve our efficiency, and better share our impact. Through these thoughtful improvements, we remain committed to preserving the "neighborhood feel" that makes AFC such a trusted and welcoming place for our patients.

That sense of trust and belonging was reflected in a recent moment when a patient was waiting for her scheduled behavioral health appointment. Our program manager, running a little behind, stepped into the waiting room to apologize for the delay. Without hesitation, the patient reassured her that she didn't mind waiting at all because she "felt safe here." Those simple words—"I feel safe here"—capture exactly what AFC strives to be: a place where people not only receive healthcare, but also find comfort, dignity, and support.

As we look ahead in the near-term, we remain committed to ensuring our patients have access to care and we thank our community for continually checking in. We are already experiencing the impact of the current landscape that is being felt by nonprofit organizations throughout Northern Virginia. AFC has weathered several storms throughout its history, and it has emerged stronger thanks to our incredible staff and volunteers and the tremendous generosity of our community. Our mission remains as critical as ever, and we thank you for your continued investment in the vital services that AFC provides to our neighbors and the community.

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so does the important work
of Arlington Free Clinic.

**Make a difference with a gift
before 6/30/25 and help us
finish our fiscal year strong!**



PATIENT STORY

"Marnie" and AFC's Intensive Diabetes Program

At Arlington Free Clinic, the prevalence of diabetes among our patients is much higher than either the diabetes prevalence of the U.S. or Virginia. Thanks to funding from an anonymous family foundation, we launched an intensive diabetes program to provide a select cohort with the tools, education, and a supportive community that empowers patients to take control over their health journey.

One of these patients is 38-year-old "Marnie", who has lived with diabetes since 2016. Despite managing her disease through medication, diet, and physical activity, Marnie still faced challenges keeping her diabetes under control. During her time in the program, she has embraced every opportunity to better understand and manage her condition. Marnie attended all group meetings, quarterly primary care visits, and an Arlington County community feedback event on local food resources. In addition, she took advantage of one-on-one sessions with our diabetes educator and pharmacist and worked with a nutritionist to tailor her dietary plan.

Her hard work paid off! In just six months, Marnie lowered her A1c from 11.1 to an impressive 7.7—an achievement that

is both a testament to her commitment and the program's potential. She credits much of her success to the relationships and "familiar faces" in the program. Also, having a dedicated team led by an AFC nurse manager and medical assistant made each visit feel more personal and supportive, fostering trust and continuity.

By combining her own determination with the knowledge and support gained through the program, Marnie has made amazing progress managing her diabetes. Most importantly, she now has the tools to sustain this progress and live a happier, healthier life.

"At AFC, our Intensive Diabetes Program takes a whole-person approach to diabetes care. Our team puts in the time and care to help patients manage not just the physical side of diabetes, but also the emotional and psychological challenges that come with it."

— *Kennya Alvarado, MSN, BSN, RN*
Director of Clinical Services