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Strengthening Arlington's Safety Net

Collaboration is at the heart of a strong safety net, and February's **More than Medical: Exploring the Social Determinants of Health** event highlighted just that.

Co-hosted by Arlington Free Clinic and Arlington Community Foundation at Marymount University's Ballston Campus, the convening brought together partners from across Arlington's nonprofit and public sectors to explore how coordinated efforts can improve health outcomes for our community.

Opening remarks from Dr. Deidra D. Parrish, Arlington County's Public Health Director in the Department of Human Services (DHS), set the tone for a conversation centered on shared responsibility. Dr. Parrish emphasized that health is shaped not only by medical care, but also by factors like housing stability, education, and access to essential resources.



Gabriela Velez, Linwood Ham (Boeing), Brian Marroquin (Arlington Community Foundation), and Skye Donovan (Marymount University)

A panel moderated by Gabriela Velez brought together (pictured below, left to right) Betsy Frantz of PathForward, Anita Friedman of DHS, Paula Fynboh of Aspire Afterschool Learning, and Lesley Daigle of AFC. Panelists shared real-world examples of how gaps in housing, food access, childcare, and transportation can impact health and how better coordination across organizations



can help close those gaps. They also spoke candidly about the challenges low-income individuals face when navigating multiple systems and the importance of reducing friction through stronger communication and alignment between safety net partners.

Through guided discussion and networking, attendees reflected on opportunities to strengthen public and private partnerships, reduce duplication of services, and improve

how organizations work together to support Arlington residents. The event reinforced a shared commitment to building a more connected, responsive safety net that meets people where they are and addresses the full picture of their health and well-being.

We are grateful to Boeing for sponsoring and to Marymount University for hosting this important convening.

Transforming Patient Care through Empanelment



Joan Bowes Ritter, MD

Patient-provider relationships are at the heart of Arlington Free Clinic's care model. However, since nearly all physicians who serve AFC are volunteers, our dedicated team of staff nurse managers serves as the main point of contact for patients, providing personalized, coordinated care.

One way this is done is through empanelment, which means that a patient is "assigned" to a nurse manager in our electronic medical record (Epic) for care coordination. Historically, every patient was automatically empaneled, with about 300 patients per nurse manager. While this approach ensured coverage, there were no set parameters for patient assignment or removal, which created challenges for our nursing team, including inconsistencies in care and difficulty prioritizing patients who might benefit most from close follow-up.

Thanks to generous grant funding from Kaiser Permanente, we are improving our empanelment process to focus on patients who will benefit most from targeted nurse-led care, including those with complex diagnoses, recent emergency room visits or hospitalizations, or patients on high-risk medications. This approach directly addresses social, language, and system

barriers and improves care coordination and patient outcomes. It also supports navigation across onsite and offsite services and early identification of high-risk patients to prevent disease progression and avoidable complications. Importantly, patients who are not empaneled will still have direct access to our staff through our nurse of the day and triage phone lines, ensuring no one falls through the cracks.

We are grateful to Kaiser Permanente for this meaningful investment in our nurse-led model of care. These improvements will combine evidence-based population health strategies with the personal touch of our skilled nursing staff, improving access to coordinated care and strengthening the patient-provider relationships that make AFC's care so impactful.

We are excited to launch AFC's new Circle of Care monthly giving program.

Each year, AFC serves hardworking neighbors managing chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, ensuring they receive the care they need to live healthier, more stable lives. Monthly giving offers a meaningful way to be part of that impact, providing the steady support needed to keep this care accessible for those who rely on it.

This spring, supporters are invited to join this group and help fund 200 patient visits each year. With each patient visit costing an average of \$276—just \$23 a month—ongoing gifts quickly add up to life-changing care. Even more, new and increased monthly gifts made in May and June may be eligible for a special matching opportunity, helping your support go even further (see pg. 6 for more information). Monthly, supporters play a critical role in sustaining care over time, helping AFC plan and meet the growing needs of patients throughout the year. To maximize your impact, start by choosing "Recurring Donation" at the top our donation form.



Giving monthly means AFC patients can count on consistent, reliable care when they need it most. It is incredibly meaningful to strengthen patients' health all year long while also giving something back, with positive impact, to our community.

DILIP GHATE
AFC MONTHLY DONOR

AFC's Intake Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of Arlington Free Clinic's care model. For over 30 years, the success of this model has been rooted in our commitment to ensuring that their time at the clinic is meaningful. One example of this is AFC's volunteer intake program, which plays a critical role in supporting both our patients and overall clinic operations. Our intake volunteers, including many of whom are interested in pursuing a career in medicine, have the opportunity to see community health in action and develop professional skills in a real-world setting.

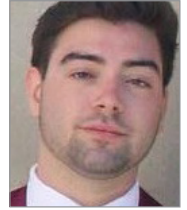
Intake volunteers assist with the flow of clinics by preparing patients for their appointments with a provider. They collect key clinical information and administer screenings related to mental health, alcohol and tobacco use, and dental concerns. They also help prepare patients for exams and communicate any concerns to the staff Nurse Manager. Over the past year, we have onboarded **68** new intake volunteers who have supported this vital first step in care. These volunteers, who include emergency medical technicians, medical assistants, and certified nursing assistants (many of whom are pre-med students), gain valuable firsthand experience with clinical workflows and community-based healthcare.

These volunteer testimonials illustrate the meaningful connections that AFC's intake volunteers build with our patients and community. We are deeply grateful for their compassion and dedication to ensuring the smooth operation of our clinics and supporting the vital infrastructure that makes accessible care possible.

"I love sitting down with patients before their visit, ensuring they feel welcomed and comfortable. It's incredibly rewarding to help bridge the gap between our community and the high-quality care they deserve."

Luca Tognelli, MA

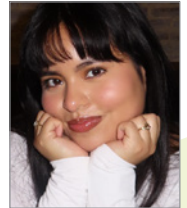
Virginia Tech, Biochemistry graduate



"The best part of intake is seeing patients feel comfortable and understood when I speak their language, as a native Spanish speaker that connection means everything to me, and I am and grateful to break these language barriers."

Ameleen Wong, CCMA

George Mason University, Biology major



JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025

Clinical Volunteers Snapshot: 13,614 hours of service!

Medical Providers
3,294 hours

Intake & Discharge
1,493 hours

Dental
170 hours

Administrative Support
1,511 hours

Interpreters
2,027 hours

Pharmacy
915 hours

Students
2,184 hours

AFC Ambassadors
55 hours

Scribes
1,367 hours

Behavioral Health:
413 hours

Vaccines
185 hours



"Working as an intake volunteer with AFC has shown me firsthand how much small moments of kindness and attentive listening can help patients feel better, and I've especially found it meaningful to grow more confident working with interpreters and even learn a few Spanish phrases to better connect with patients across language barriers."

Adhithi Rajesh, EMT

Georgetown University, Pre-Med track



"As an intake volunteer, I enjoy the opportunity to connect with patients and help them feel welcome at AFC. My role allows me to maintain my clinical communication skills which are valuable as a healthcare worker."

Dominic Fiedtkou-Leonard, EMT

*Virginia Commonwealth University,
Master's Candidate*



"My role at AFC is a mutualistic one: the patients help me just as much as I help them. Every shift, I see my efforts directly bridging gaps in care within my community, and in return, I am continually grounded by patients' warmth and inspired by their resilience."

Tannaz Ghobadi, CCMA

*Johns Hopkins University,
Master's in Biotechnology*



"The situation of the world always seems to be so heartbreaking and overwhelming. A lot of times, I feel completely helpless. When I volunteer at AFC, I feel more grounded and connected to my local community. I love speaking with each patient and sincerely wish the best for each of them. After every shift, I feel less fear and less hurt. Volunteering makes me realize that there are people working hard everyday to care for one another, and that I can contribute to that, even if in a small way."

Jordan Elarfari, EMT

Georgetown University, Pre-Med track



"Working with patients at AFC is especially meaningful because they are part of my local community."

Emily Hunter, CCMA

University of Virginia graduate



Learn more about
volunteering at AFC:



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Lesley Daigle, CEO

LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Renewing Hope This Spring

As we welcome spring, I find myself filled with gratitude for the compassion and commitment you make possible.

Thanks to you, AFC is a true healthcare home, offering free medical, behavioral health, pharmacy services, social service coordination, and low-cost dental care to more than 1,600 adults annually. Our integrated, whole-person care model where physicians, counselors, pharmacists, dentists, and other providers work side-by-side continues to make a meaningful difference in both immediate health outcomes and long-term wellbeing.

Each day at AFC, we see firsthand the real impact of accessible healthcare for our patients, many who work in the essential service sectors that keep Arlington running, including in restaurants, construction, and childcare, just to name a few. These are our neighbors who work hard to care for their families, but their job benefits don't include health insurance. With rising healthcare costs and more families falling into coverage gaps, many will be forced to delay care or rely on emergency services, further straining their health and financial stability.

In response to these growing challenges, your generosity helps sustain our operations and ensures we can continue providing vital care to our community. This spring, there are several meaningful ways to deepen your impact.

You might consider joining our **monthly giving program (page 2)**, which provides steady, reliable support so patients can count on care year-round. And for those looking to make an even greater difference, gifts made in May and June will be eligible for a **matching opportunity (page 6)**, doubling the impact of your support. Lastly, if you are interested in learning more about **AFC Partners** and making a long-term investment in the health of our community, we would love to connect with you.

Together, we can continue providing care, dignity, and stability to every neighbor who needs it. Thank you for being a partner in health and hope.

Warmly,

Lesley Daigle
CEO, Arlington Free Clinic

To learn more about **AFC Partners**, contact **Beth Gorman**
bgorman@arlingtonfreeclinic.org
571-569-3569

We invite you to watch our second annual **State of the Clinic** address.

In this brief video, Lesley shares key milestones from the past year, discusses the challenges we're navigating together, and looks ahead to what's next—expanding access, strengthening capacity, and ensuring every neighbor has high-quality care services. Watch now ▶



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With your support, AFC provides comprehensive healthcare services for those who would otherwise lack access.

As AFC approaches the end of its fiscal year on June 30, we are especially grateful for the community of supporters who make our work possible.

Last year, June's matching gift campaign was an incredible success, helping expand access to care and respond to growing demand in our community.

This spring, that opportunity returns! During the months of May and June, **two generous donors will match every gift, dollar for dollar, up to \$50,000.** It's a powerful way to maximize impact, ensuring that every contribution goes twice as far in supporting high-quality, compassionate care for those who need it most.

Whether you have already given this year or are considering making a first gift, this matching period offers a unique chance to make an even greater difference for our patients.

