

## This Is How You Make a Difference

More than 25 years ago, Americares founder Bob Macauley recognized the need to provide health care to his low-income, uninsured neighbors in Fairfield County. Macauley also saw the opportunity to engage the community to make that happen.

Now, in our 25th year of service, the four Americares Free Clinics have provided no-cost health care to almost 27,000 people; garnered support from corporations, family foundations and individual donors; employed dozens of local staff; and welcomed the services of more than 220 skilled volunteers. In all, Americares Free Clinics have provided medical services valued at more than \$100 million.

These services are critical: The rates of uninsured in the four communities that host Americares Free Clinics have risen in the last year and now range from 13.1 percent in Stamford to 21.4 percent in Norwalk. The low-income uninsured, who often must choose between food or rent and health care, are more likely to suffer from and be hospitalized for uncontrolled chronic disease.

Corporate supporters and volunteers alike recognize the value of helping their neighbors. Susan Garofoli has been volunteering at the Norwalk clinic as a patient screener for 25 years and knows firsthand the need for health services in Fairfield County. "People are desperate for health care," she says. She and her husband are also committed supporters of Americares Free Clinics. "The Norwalk clinic is a small space, but it's so powerful," says Garofoli.

The clinics' volunteer medical staff have a unique understanding of the impact of the clinics on patients' lives. Bob Macauley Americares Free Clinic of Norwalk Medical Director Ari Perkins, MD, is also an attending emergency physician at Norwalk Hospital. "If Americares did not exist, then at best, patients could come to see me or my colleagues in the emergency department, which would be a short-term fix, not a long-term health solution," says Dr. Perkins.

For global pharmaceutical company Boehringer Ingelheim, support for Americares Free Clinics stems from a "shared passion" to help low-income uninsured patients access high quality health care, says Karen Iannella, president, Boehringer Ingelheim Cares Foundation, which is based in Danbury.



Americares Free Clinics puts health within reach for families in Fairfield County.

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That passion extends to research and disease prevention: Americares Free Clinics unique health coach program is supported by Boehringer Ingelheim. The program helps patients make healthful changes; by tracking patients' health, the project also contributes to knowledge around chronic disease prevention. "It's very rewarding to be part of a program that's making a difference in our local community by helping to empower patients to lead healthier lives," says Iannella. "The feedback we've received from patients who have benefitted is inspiring and reminds us of why we come to work each day."

**To learn how the clinics changed the life of one patient, please turn to page 4.**

## Norwalk Clinic Director Veronica Sullivan Receives Honor

Congratulations to Veronica Sullivan, director of the Bob Macauley Americares Free Clinic of Norwalk, who is one of five outstanding Latino women honored on International Women's Day by Crisol Acuarela in a ceremony at the Ferguson Library in Stamford. Sullivan was recognized in the health category for her outstanding service to Fairfield County. Crisol Acuarela promotes the economic, social, cultural and educational aspects of the Latin community. Felicidades Veronica Sullivan!



# From the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

I admit—I have an unusual view of health care in the United States. When I walk through the doors of AmeriCare Free Clinics on any given day, I see my low-income uninsured neighbors receiving warm, quality health care: Patients are making appointments for check-ups, discussing lab test results with doctors and working with staff to address the lifestyle changes they need to manage chronic disease.

These scenes repeat behind our clinic doors in Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk and Stamford more than 12,000 times a year as close to 3,000 patients seek care.

Unfortunately, I know that for all too many in the U.S., health care is not accessible. For the first time since the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the number of uninsured people increased in 2017. In Connecticut, nearly 194,000 people are uninsured.

Those with low incomes are more likely to be uninsured. Health care costs can challenge even the thrifty and sink people into debt and bankruptcy. Years of life are lost to the ravages of untreated chronic disease—productive years, time that could be spent with family and contributing to strong communities.

I am proud to say that AmeriCare Free Clinics creates exceptions—our patients may not earn enough to pay for insurance or work at jobs where they would qualify for coverage, but that is no reason they should not receive quality health care.

That is where you come in. Your support saves lives and improves health. I see it every day.

Thank you,

Karen Gottlieb, RN, MBA

## Partnering to Provide Healthful Food

It's easy for a health provider to say, "eat more fruits, vegetables and lean meats," but if patients live far from a quality grocery store or are dealing with poverty, doing so can be a challenge. AmeriCare Free Clinics and the Connecticut Food Bank are closing the gap for Bridgeport residents: A mobile food pantry now distributes fresh produce at no cost at the Fred Weisman Free Clinic of Bridgeport on the second Saturday of each month.

"We emphasize access to nutritious foods as a strategy to manage and improve health outcomes," says Connecticut Food Bank CEO Bernie Beaudreau. "By linking our mobile pantry with the clinic, we are linking two services that are vital for people in need."

Bridgeport residents are taking their pick of vegetables and fruits, such as carrots, broccoli, apples and oranges, and protein such as chicken and salmon—about 6,000 pounds a month. The mobile pantry has the look and feel of a farmer's market; customers select the foods they prefer.

AmeriCare Free Clinic staff know that many patients need access to food: One in eight people in Connecticut struggle with hunger and one in six children are food insecure. "This partnership will ensure Bridgeport residents have access to fresh and nutritious food no matter what difficulties they may be facing," says clinic Director Jennifer DaSilva.



The first distribution of healthful food at AmeriCare Free Clinic in Bridgeport was on a very chilly February 9, 2019.

## Volunteer News

"When I decided that it was time to pay my 'civic rent,' I found I could have an impact by using my language skills to translate with a caring, compassionate and understanding ear. Many patients arrive at the clinic in an anxious or generally distressed state, which is often rapidly relieved by the appearance of someone who speaks their language. Every time a patient hugs me, I get chills and feel like I really made a difference at perhaps a difficult time in their life."

Ana Lilienfeld, Volunteer Stamford Interpreter



## Welcome to Our New Volunteers

### BRIDGEPORT

Alexandra Alvarez  
Christopher Boreyko MD  
Devin Criniti  
David Dios  
Ryan Foley RN  
Carole Fulton  
Noah Hendler NP  
Trudy Hilton  
Carol Kagdis NP  
Vahide Kamberi  
Natalie Leslie  
Allison Miller  
Hafsa Nawaz MD  
Haq Nawaz MD  
Valeria Renderos  
Ali Saslafsky RN  
Ian Speers

Monique Wilson  
Sara Zaytoun

### DANBURY

Geraldine Budd NP  
Tamara Marques  
Kimberly Pratt RN

### NORWALK

Carmen Hollenberg  
Christina Fatse RN  
Maria Baldi RN  
Kyle Capone  
Sally Chao MD  
Lovely Guillaume  
Vanessa Hucharo  
Heidi Laub  
Daniel Monahan  
Janet Prior

Katherine Reese MD  
Wendy Sayles

### STAMFORD

Marjorye Alday RN  
Stefan Dulak  
Cassandra Esposito RN  
Tina Fenaroli RN  
Peter Gardner MD  
Pilar Jablonski  
Megan Johnston  
Patricia Ramirez  
Noel Robin MD  
Denise Shepard  
Maria Smelser  
Olivia Stone

# Celebrating Clinic Volunteers

Americares Free Clinics hosted our annual volunteer appreciation celebration on April 25 to recognize the dedicated volunteers who make its work possible.



Americares Free Clinic Executive Director Karen Gottlieb welcomed volunteers and described the value of their contributions.



From left: Karina Thompson, interpreter, Norwalk; Ali Saslafsky, RN, Bridgeport; Hafsa Nawaz, MD, Bridgeport.



Sheila Staub, RN, (center) enjoys a moment with Americares Free Clinic staffer Analisa Martinez (left).



From left: Matthew Bunce, EMT, Stamford; Joan Cohen, interpreter, Stamford; Fran Ginsburg, MD, Stamford; Donna Getreuer, RN, Stamford; Tina Fenaroli, RN, Stamford; Mary Balkun, director.

## In Honor and Remembrance: Alfred Wolfsohn, MD 1929-2018



Dr. Alfred Wolfson volunteered at Americares Free Clinics for 19 years, from 1999 to 2018. He gave his time unselfishly and used his exemplary medical skills to care for patients in need. He believed in listening to patients, confident that they would guide him in making an accurate diagnosis. Dr. Wolfson personified all that is best in medicine, acting with enduring integrity, principles and ideas. He will be deeply missed.

## Hometown Hero and Doctor of Distinction



On May 23, Paul Schwartz, MD, received the Team Player award at the Fairfield County Doctors of Distinction Awards and was featured as the News 12 Hometown Hero. Dr. Schwartz received both honors for his volunteer work at the Bob Macauley Americares Free Clinic of Norwalk, where he has contributed 1,700 hours of patient care in just over a decade. "Patients have expressed that before meeting Dr. Schwartz, they had little hope for their health—he has changed that for them," says Veronica Sullivan, director of the Bob Macauley Americares Free Clinic of Norwalk "He renews hope, offers support and ensures every patient receives the quality care he or she deserves."

### **Fred Weisman AmeriCares Free Clinic**

115 Highland Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
203.333.9175

### **Boehringer Ingelheim AmeriCares Free Clinic**

76 West Street  
Danbury, CT 06810  
203.748.6188

### **Bob Macauley AmeriCares Free Clinic**

98 South Main Street  
Norwalk, CT 06854  
203.899.2493

### **Americares Free Clinic of Stamford**

401 Shippan Avenue  
Stamford, CT 06902  
203.658.9507

## A Patient's Story: Kenny

A year ago, Kenny was without a home or a job. But he did have an appointment at the Fred Weisman AmeriCares Free Clinic of Bridgeport – a date that saved his life. Just days before his appointment, Kenny's van had been stolen. Kenny had been living in his van, so when it disappeared, so did his home, his mechanic's tools and, perhaps most critically, his insulin, the medicine he needs to stay alive.

After Patient Care Coordinator Karina Rodriguez noticed Kenny was quiet and withdrawn during his check-up, Kenny told Rodriguez about the loss of his van. As well as providing primary care, AmeriCares Free Clinic staff connect patients to services for which they are eligible, and Rodriguez did just that, contacting Bridgeport's Homeless Outreach Team.

Kenny hadn't always been without means. A skilled auto mechanic, Kenny immigrated from Trinidad to the United States 30 years ago and, after managing a successful repair shop in New York, bought a building in Bridgeport to relocate his business.

All along, Kenny had been working with an immigration lawyer to attain legal status. But when Kenny first used his new social security card, he learned the number was bogus. Kenny's calls to his lawyer went unanswered and he realized he had been scammed out of his entire savings. When the building he'd purchased in Bridgeport turned out to be unusable for a repair shop, Kenny was bankrupt and forced to live in his van, using his tools to pick up freelance repair jobs.

Now, helped by the Homeless Outreach Team staff, Kenny has an apartment. He continues to receive care at AmeriCares Free Clinic. And he is very thankful for the connections AmeriCares Free Clinics staff made on his behalf. "I receive very good care here—there are no mistakes and everyone cares," says Kenny. "They helped me find food, clothing, a house—everything. I am happy. Good people really do exist."



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– Bridgeport clinic patient Kenny