



APR  
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Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program



# THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

### Our Mission:

The mission of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) is to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women and children in the greater Boston area.

### BHCHP Offers:

Primary Care  
Behavioral Health  
Oral Health  
Family Services  
Case Management  
Medical Respite Care  
Outreach

### We are:

Physicians  
Dentists  
Registered Nurses  
Social Workers  
Building & Maintenance Staff  
Physician Assistants  
Nurse Practitioners  
Administrative Staff  
Psychiatrists  
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counselors  
Food Services Staff  
Case Managers  
Dental Hygienists

*The View From the Bridge* is a publication of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, bridging the gap between homelessness and health 24/7/365.

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## THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN 25 YEARS OF MEDICINE THAT MATTERS.

Dear Friends,

For 25 years, our simple mission has remained the same: **to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women and children in the greater Boston area.** This mission is brought to life each day by clinical and non-clinical staff alike committed to bringing hope with the healing. We believe that this has been and will continue to be **medicine that matters** because:

- it is a sustained effort that adapts the practice of healthcare to the unique needs of our patients, with respect and compassion and
- it has been supported since the very beginning by the generosity of countless donors.

For all of these 25 years you have made this work possible. We cannot overstate your importance as we recall just a few of the many ways in which your generosity has had a lasting impact. With your help:

- vulnerable patients are kept alive and get help managing chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension and cancer;
- dedicated clinical and non-clinical staff share their passion for a vibrant mission and support each other in bringing the mission to life; and
- Boston's many hospitals have a dependable alternative to their emergency rooms and a safe discharge location for medically vulnerable patients.

Our hope for the future remains strong as we re-commit to this mission with the hope that you will join us once again. We look beyond 2010 confident that, together, we will continue to learn, adapt and prevail in the effort to heal the men, women and children who live homeless and at risk on the edges of our society.

Robert Taube, PhD, MPH  
Executive Director

James O'Connell, MD  
President

## 1,377 children call a motel room "Home" as BHCHP expands services to 8 more motels. 3,000 families remain homeless in Massachusetts.

Over **3,000** families are still homeless in Massachusetts today. **937** of those families are living in motels.

Since our last update in November, BHCHP's Family Team caregivers are bringing care to **8** more motels and now visit **13** motels in **8** cities and towns: Boston, Brockton, Cambridge, Malden, Quincy, Saugus, Waltham and Woburn.

Your generosity is helping to fund their work. You are helping to keep nurses, nurse practitioners, case managers, and family therapists in close contact with vulnerable parents and children at a very challenging time in their lives. *Thank you.*



Nurses bring fun along with medicine to children living in motel rooms.



Jessie Gaeta, MD, medical director at BHCHP's Barbara McInnis House



### What is Housing First/ Home & Healthy For Good?

States have traditionally dealt with chronically homeless men and women by moving them into a shelter then up the ladder to treatment for addiction or mental illness until they are finally moved into transitional housing. But administering care and medication on a consistent basis to homeless patients living in this system is challenging at best and chronic diseases can progress rapidly without effective management. *Housing First*, a federally funded program which houses chronically homeless men and women, has turned that process on its head by providing safe, stable housing as the first priority. Once housed, *Home & Healthy for Good* is making it possible for these homeless men and women to address their most pressing health challenges.

### MEDICINE THAT MATTERS: AN UNCONVENTIONAL TREATMENT MODEL THAT IS CHANGING THE ODDS

What does a doctor do when her sickest patients are chronically homeless men and women who live in shelters or on the street and she wants to do more than patch them up...when she actually wants to manage the devastating impact of their chronic illnesses like cancer, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure...just like other doctors do at all the traditional places where doctors work?

If that MD's name is **Jessie Gaeta**, she musters her frustration into action and becomes an advocate for "**housing**" as an essential part of the treatment of chronic disease among the chronically homeless.

Is this **medicine that matters**? Jessie Gaeta, who is the Medical Director at BHCHP's Barbara McInnis House and the co-founder of The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance's (MHSA's) **Home & Healthy for Good** initiative, answers it this way:

"Housing is the foundation upon which improved health outcomes are being built."

This medicine matters because some of our chronically homeless patients are housed:

- where they can rest and heal properly,
- where they can keep food and medication,
- where they can live relatively free from threat or violence and
- where case managers can offer individualized support that links patients with:
  - mental health services,
  - substance abuse services and
  - vocational and life skills assistance.

In this pioneering system of care, caregivers are able to make critical adjustments as new issues present new challenges. Optimism is prevailing because BHCHP caregivers are seeing improved management of chronic disease at the same time that they are seeing advances in quality of care. Among the housed:

- the number of visits to emergency rooms is significantly reduced,
- more patients come in for preventative mammograms and colonoscopies,
- more cancers have been diagnosed earlier,
- more glucose levels have been stabilized,
- more prescriptions for insulin and beta blockers are being taken as prescribed.

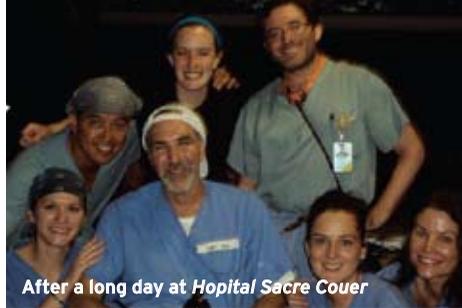
Your generosity is supporting the work of BHCHP's caregivers as they address some of the most severe challenges of homelessness. You are helping in the management of chronic disease and improving quality of care for Boston's homeless men and women

You can listen to a conversation with Jessie Gaeta, MD, titled *Home & Healthy For Good Fixes Homelessness* archived on NPR at [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org).

## OUR STORY

Founded in 1985 and operating in the black each year since, BHCHP provides care to more than 11,000 homeless children, women and men annually. BHCHP runs clinics on the campuses of *Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Medical Center* and also delivers comprehensive care at more than 80 family and adult shelters (including *Pine Street Inn, Rosie's Place, St. Francis House, The New England Center for Homeless Veterans*) and in soup kitchens, on street corners and in the backstretch of a racetrack. In addition BHCHP operates the Barbara McInnis House at Jean Yawkey Place, a 104 bed medical respite facility for homeless adults with complex conditions like cancer, heart disease, pneumonia and diabetes who are too sick to live in shelter or on the street and would otherwise require prolonged and costly hospitalization in the acute care rooms of Boston's hospitals.

**DONATE NOW: WWW.BHCHP.ORG**



## UNIFIED EFFORT BRINGS KEEN NURSING SKILLS TO HAITI *(continued)*

### Back at home in Boston:

- Nurses are covering extra shifts for their Haiti bound peers to ensure that all services to BHCHP's hundreds of respite and clinic patients throughout Boston continue uninterrupted,
- dozens of staff, family and friends, as well as two anonymous foundations, have given thousands of dollars to help defray travel costs and,
- days of vacation are being donated by co-workers to replace the vacation time used in travel to Haiti.

"It's been 100% co-operation and support. Staff nurses have been volunteering to work days and nights, in every needed combination, to make it possible for their co-workers to go to Haiti. Our nurses know they are helping the people of Haiti from a distance and, at the same time, ensuring that the good care of our patients continues back here in Boston."

**Lynette Edmonds**, Respite Scheduler

It is a time of great pride that you, who support our work, share. All of us at BHCHP feel honored by the opportunity to travel in person or in spirit to help meet this desperate need.

Video Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDo6ibXOJDQ>

### A few words about the Haiti connection to BHCHP:

- The need for doctors, nurses, physician assistants and nurse practitioners at *Hopital Sacre Coeur* in Cap Haitien, Haiti remains desperate. Clinicians at the hospital are caring for many orthopedic patients as well as dealing with wound care and a constantly growing number of secondary infections.
- In addition to their regular hospital – which normally treats about 60 people – *Hopital Sacre Coeur* set up a new hospital in classrooms and tents where they are now caring for as many as 400 people.
- Administrators from the hospital knew of BHCHP trauma care skills through international medical circles and asked for teams of clinical staff.
- BHCHP staff responded, expecting they would have to pay their own way and use their own vacation time when they committed to this errand of mercy.

## MAKING NEWS BY MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**Karen Sherwin**, who has cared for patients as a Nurse Practitioner at BHCHP's primary care clinic at Pine Street Inn since November 2003, was honored on April 16 by the Massachusetts Association of Registered Nurses (MARN) for **Excellence in Nursing Practice**. Karen has brought excellent clinical acumen and cultural sensitivity to the men and women who are patients at the Pine Street Inn clinic as she calmly, clearly and sensitively addresses complicated medical, psychological and substance abuse issues and develops well conceived, individualized treatment plans.

**Barbara McInnis House**, BHCHP's medical respite care facility, was recently honored with the **2009 Community Partnership National Award** along with a grant of \$25,000, given by Mutual of America, a nationwide provider of retirement, insurance and other financial products to the non-profit and for-profit sectors. Barbara McInnis House counts as its partners Boston Medical Center, Massachusetts General Hospital and over 80 shelter and outreach organizations including the Pine Street Inn, St. Francis House, Rosie's Place, and the New England Center for Homeless Veterans.

**Dr. Alan Filzer**, DDS, the director of the dental clinic at BHCHP's Jean Yawkey Place, has been named "**Employee of the Year**" by the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers. This annual award is given to only three individuals from the entire State. Dr. Filzer is being recognized for his lifelong work to meet the oral health needs of the poor and underserved.

## GENEROUS DONORS HAVE BEEN SUSTAINING BHCHP SINCE BEFORE IT WAS BORN

We often write, "We couldn't have done it over these 25 years without you." Sometimes, when we dig a little deeper, we're surprised by the truth of those words. Take **Alison Abdu** for example. Alison has known BHCHP since *before it was born*.

In 1985, Alison worked at the *Welfare Department*, overseeing services for homeless individuals and families. Her team helped structure the service model and distribution of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds that first established healthcare services for homeless men, women and children living here in Boston. "At Welfare we knew that this was important and necessary work and we wanted it to succeed. We could tell, from the very beginning, that an amazing team would be involved. We worked hard to support their work and mission; we knew that the funds were in good hands and that essential services were being provided in very creative ways. It was an inspiring team of 5 or 6 people then – and it has been astounding to watch the team grow to almost 300 today and the range of services expand to meet the growing need."

"I hope other donors will join me in supporting BHCHP automatically, with an electronic deduction each month. Life is too busy to have to remember to write a check and I want to seamlessly support their work. I still feel great affinity for Jim O'Connell and all that BHCHP has become, and greatly value the real difference they make every single day to the thousands of homeless people they serve."

In addition to being a "*monthly sustainer*" for many years, Alison served on BHCHP's Advisory Board in the early 90's despite her busy professional life and very young family. That life is no less busy today with teenagers and a career as Corporate Director of Human Resources Services at Partners HealthCare.

BHCHP has been very fortunate over the years to have the support of people like Alison who bring the organization into life and support it for years and years. *Thank you. We truly could not have done it over these 25 years without you.*



Cecilia Ibeabuchi, RN cares for feet at BHCHP's St. Francis House foot clinic.

## YOU CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE WITH A SMALL GIFT

There have never been more homeless men, women and children in Massachusetts than there are today. You can make a real difference in the quality of their lives with any of the items listed below.

- new white socks
- new underwear (men's and women's)
- diapers
- sneakers
- gift cards:
  - Target
  - Dunkin' Donuts
  - McDonald's
  - grocery chains
  - phone cards

We can never have too many of these items.

### Why Socks?

Access to socks is often limited for homeless men and women living in shelters and on the streets. Common infections such as athlete's foot thrive when damp socks are worn for days at a time. Frostbite is common in colder months, sometimes resulting in toe amputations. The best way to prevent such conditions is to keep feet clean and dry – very difficult if you spend your days outside. That's why BHCHP has a daily foot clinic at St. Francis House and regularly scheduled foot clinics at other primary care sites.

Contact [volunteer@bhchp.org](mailto:volunteer@bhchp.org) or call Carrie Eldridge-Dickson at **857.654.1048** for more information, to find out about other "Small Gift" needs or to make arrangements for delivery.



Patient finishes afghan at Tuesday Night Stitch.

## VOLUNTEERS PLAY IMPORTANT ROLE IN HEALING PATIENTS AT BARBARA MCINNIS HOUSE

“Our goal is to foster a sense of community and continuity...even extending to those who never attend the group but know that we are here.” **Mary Jo Cappuccilli, RN** and knitting volunteer at Barbara McInnis House

One would not think that the knitters sitting on the fringe of the large atrium at Barbara McInnis House could accomplish such a lofty goal... but they do. A cool atrium becomes a warm living room where words are woven into conversations while yarn is woven into scarves and hats. Other men and women on nearby sofas open books or chat while they absorb the comfortable atmosphere. A respite care facility becomes a healing home when nimble fingers and simple pleasures prevail.

Volunteers have become part of the treatment plan...the healing that goes on at Barbara McInnis House. “**The Tuesday Night Stitch**” witnesses to the important role volunteers play in the recovery of the men and women in respite care there. These patients are not only recovering from cancer surgery or heart disease or diabetes, they are recovering from the debilitating disease of invisibility as they weave colored yarns into a sense of well being in their challenging world.

When Regina, a patient who could not knit because of neuropathy in her hands, lingered with the group despite her trouble, it was knitting volunteer **Betsy Youngholm** who worked with Regina until she succeeded. “I can’t believe I’m doing this. I feel good!” These words heralded a triumph over much more than a lack of dexterity.

“When I’m on my way to work I sometimes see former patients on the Boston Common, wearing their knitted and crocheted creations or those that have been donated by other volunteer knitters,” said **Pauline Edmonds**, a lawyer, RN and knitting volunteer. “It’s nice to be able to give a wave or chat a bit about how life is going. I enjoy being part of this community of “Tuesday Night Stitchers.”

Sometimes something as simple as a shared interest in a hobby filled with healing memories is the most important medicine.

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## YOUR SUPPORT WILL BRING...

the **Dignity** of reconstructive dentistry to a 31-year-old mother living in a domestic violence shelter with her 3 children.

the **Trust** of a therapist to a deeply depressed 46-year-old man living in a doorway.

the **Hope** of a respite bed and medical care to a 51-year-old women recuperating from breast cancer at Barbara McInnis House.

the **Healing** comfort of a nurse’s visit to a mother and her 8-year-old girl spending their fourth month in a motel room.

Donate Now

[WWW.BHCHP.ORG](http://WWW.BHCHP.ORG)



BOSTON HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS PROGRAM

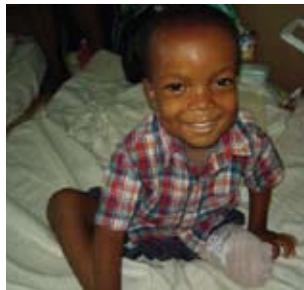
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## 25 YEARS OF MEDICINE THAT MATTERS



### UNIFIED EFFORT BRINGS KEEN NURSING SKILLS TO HAITI



Desiree Otenti, BHCHP RN with two of her patients in Haiti

From February 4 through May 29 caregivers and non-caregivers throughout BHCHP are uniting to bring healing to Haiti.

#### On the ground in Haiti:

33 BHCHP doctors, nurses, physician assistants and nurse practitioners are rotating into Haiti for week-long stints to bring urgently needed care to injured earthquake patients who are being flown by helicopter to *Hopital Sacre Coeur* in Cap Haitien, 60 miles north of Port-Au-Prince.

Sharpened by their challenging and important work in Boston, BHCHP medical teams have developed keen assessment and trauma care skills that transfer, almost seamlessly, to earthquake patients in need of post-surgical care, wound care, infection care and mental health care in shattered Haiti.

“I was struck most by how the community of patients, family members, and staff came together to care for the injured. Even though we bore witness to a great tragedy I kept experiencing hope and I felt honored to offer a modicum of comfort. We would often talk to a “family” member of an injured patient after they had bathed and fed the patient only to find out that the patient and “family” were complete strangers. They were changing and cleaning and feeding and comforting because ‘You were supposed to help your neighbor even if you didn’t know them before!’”

**Barry Bock**, RN, BHCHP’s Director of Clinical Operations

*continued inside*