

# THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program / Summer 2014

This issue: Sox for Socks p2 / Coming Full Circle p3 / On the Front Lines back cover [www.bhchp.org](http://www.bhchp.org)

**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.

**We Offer:** Primary Care, Behavioral Health, Oral Health, Family Services, Case Management, Addictions Services, Medical Respite Care, and Outreach



**We Are:** Administrative Staff, Building & Maintenance Staff, Case Managers, Dental Assistants, Dentists, Food Services Staff, Behavioral Health & Substance Abuse Counselors, Community Health Workers, Benefits Enrollment Specialists, Nurse Practitioners, Physicians, Physician Assistants, Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Registered Nurses, Social Workers, Respite Aides, AmeriCorps/Community HealthCorps Members

## GOOD EVENING, FAMILY

### A message from Barry Bock, Chief Executive Officer

**For the past five years** John Griffin, founding member of our Consumer Advisory Board (CAB), began and ended each meeting with these heartfelt words: “Good evening, family.”

The CAB was created in 1996 to serve as a vehicle for patients of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) to become a collaborative and representative voice on the quality and scope of the services we provide—to engage people experiencing homelessness in dialogue about issues important to them.

Composed of homeless or formerly homeless men and women, CAB members are either past or current consumers of our services.

It is because of their dedication that BHCHP’s consumer board has become the national model for all two hundred Health Care for the Homeless programs across the nation.

Since its inception the CAB has become an integral part of our program, helping to administer patient satisfaction surveys, while vetting key policy and advocacy decisions for BHCHP. The CAB also works on special projects, such as patient health fairs and holiday events for children experiencing homelessness. We have worked diligently to incorporate consumers in all aspects of our work, including providing two seats on our program-wide Quality and Efficiency Committee.

Twelve members of the consumer board have served on BHCHP’s Board of Directors to help the program recognize its strengths, weaknesses, and challenges, accomplishing both its defined and evolving mission. This past year we reached a significant milestone: six members of our Board of Directors are consumers.

Despite the CAB’s accomplishments, this past year has been marred by loss. Within a span of five months, our consumer board lost four longtime members: John Griffin, Louise Mercurio, Jay Tankanow, and Michael Reynolds.

These significant losses have reminded us how grateful we are for the perseverance and commitment of our Consumer Advisory Board members and the good work they have done and continue to do.

The personal challenges of each of our patients—John, Louise, Jay, and Michael, included—are complicated and unique.

By sharing their stories with us, John, Louise, Jay, and Michael became part of our family. Their stories are our stories.

“Good evening, family.” ■

**BHCHP’s consumer board has become the national model for all two hundred Health Care for the Homeless programs across the nation.**

## VISIT US AT 780 ALBANY STREET: "52 TOURS IN 52 WEEKS"

In January, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) launched our own New Year's Resolution to host at least "52 Tours in 52 Weeks". Thanks to the interest and enthusiasm of our donors and friends we have met our goal with many weeks left to spare. To that end, we're increasing the challenge by doubling the number of tours we hope to offer—**104 tours by the end of 2014!** If you haven't visited BHCHP yet, now is a great time to schedule a tour and help us meet our new goal.

After one recent tour, a donor shared, "I was much impressed with your whole operation and look forward to being connected with it as much as I can afford...we both came away feeling we had seen something very worthwhile." We hope that you, too, will consider making time for a visit this year. ■

For questions or to schedule a tour, please contact Carrie Eldridge-Dickson at [celdridge-dickson@bhchp.org](mailto:celdridge-dickson@bhchp.org) or call 857.654.1048.



Many homeless men and women spend their days outside in all kinds of weather and have limited access to shoes and socks. Wearing damp socks for days or weeks at a time increases the risk of skin infections and frostbite. Keeping feet clean and dry is the best way to prevent such conditions.

The Red Sox Foundation and NESN teamed up with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program for the ninth year to collect new white athletic socks from fans who attended the Red Sox vs. Royals games at Fenway Park from Friday, July 18th through Sunday, July 20th. During those three games we collected 4,000 pairs of socks and \$2,500 in cash donations to support our work!

Didn't make it to a game? BHCHP continues to invite businesses, faith groups, schools, and colleges to participate in **Sox for Socks** by coordinating your own sock drive. Join over 100 groups, including our largest sock drive supporter, the **Boston Red Sox**, in a seasonal drive to collect new

socks for men and women living in shelters and on the streets. Sox for Socks is a simple, fun way to make a difference. No sizes to worry about. No colors to choose between. Just new white socks.

To coordinate your sock drive, register online at [www.bhchp.org](http://www.bhchp.org) and join the momentum of Sox for Socks anytime during the Red Sox season! ■

For more information about the drive or to request collection materials contact: [soxforsocks@bhchp.org](mailto:soxforsocks@bhchp.org).



Michael Macomber, NP, cares for patients at BHCHP's clinic at St. Francis House.

### News

- ▶ **Travis Baggett, MD**, is the lead author of an article titled "Feet First: Reflections on Primary Care for Homeless People with Serious Mental Illness" published in the *Society of General Medicine*.
- ▶ We are thrilled to announce that **Bank of America** has named BHCHP one of its 2013 **Neighborhood Builder Award** recipients! The award gives us the chance to access leadership development programs and provides \$200,000 in unrestricted funding during these uncertain financial times to support the vital programs we provide Boston's homeless population. We are proud to join the 800 nonprofit organizations across the country who have received this award since 2004. Bank of America's support will be instrumental in helping us expand our programs to meet the needs of those in our community who need it most!
- ▶ In October of 2013, the 9th Annual **International Street Medicine Symposium** was held in Boston—with BHCHP serving as the host organization. The Symposium is the world's premiere educational event dedicated to the health care of unsheltered or "rough-sleeping" homeless populations. Over 150 individuals from 16 countries and 4 continents visited Jean Yawkey Place and had a chance to experience our program.
- ▶ BHCHP is the 2014 recipient of the **American Academy of Physician Assistants' Caring for Communities award!** The award recognizes and supports the work of PAs and PA students making a difference in the lives of people struggling with a variety of healthcare and social issues. Congratulations to BHCHP's PAs: Cathy Bieksha, Rebekah Diky, Julie Foster, Carole Hohl, James Noonan, Jill Roncarati, Melinda Thomas, and Gretchen Treves!
- ▶ In October 2013, **Barbara Cocci**, Director of Behavioral Health, received the Excellence in Leadership Award from the Association for Behavioral Health Care of Massachusetts. Barbara has been working with BHCHP for the past 20 years, leading the Behavioral Health Team for the majority of that time. As Director of Behavioral Health, Barbara has grown the team from two clinicians to a multidisciplinary behavioral health team made up of 15 therapists along with psychiatry and clinical nurse specialists.



# COMING FULL CIRCLE: AMERICORPS/COMMUNITY HEALTHCORPS® MEMBER TO PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT



James Noonan, PA, examines a patient recuperating at the Barbara McClinnis House.

**James Noonan** has been here before. In fact, he's just started his third position with BHCHP after a journey that seemed to lead him back to us.

During his undergraduate days at Boston College, James began his passion for and dedication to working with the underserved. He volunteered each week in the clothing closet of a local shelter through a campus ministry program combining service and reflection.

Searching for solidarity with like-minded people and looking to bear witness to vexing social issues, James joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) after graduation. Stationed in Anchorage, Alaska he provided employment counseling, referrals, and other services to homeless teens in a day center.

**...he recalled BHCHP as he listed his values: constant innovation, autonomy, non-profit, a place that treats their employees well.**

In 2006, back in Boston, James joined BHCHP's AmeriCorps/Community HealthCorps® team as a case manager, assisting patients with their discharge plan and their non-medical needs, at the Barbara McClinnis House. This service experience gave him the time and space to think and reflect, without being a part of the daily grind of a more traditional

job, as well as helping him sort out his path in the health care field.

After completing his AmeriCorps/Community HealthCorps® commitment, James was hired by BHCHP as a full-time professional case manager. In fact, BHCHP has hired 13 AmeriCorps/Community HealthCorps® alums over the years—leveraging their year of experience and familiarity with our complex patients. His employment with BHCHP and his mentors here helped

James see that becoming a physician's assistant (PA) was the right career choice.

In May 2011, James left BHCHP for the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle. During his studies, he received an assignment to write about his ideal job and he recalled BHCHP as he listed his values: constant innovation, autonomy, non-profit, a place that treats their employees well.

When he finished his program last summer, James and his fiancée, Elana, were caught up in trying to decide between staying in Seattle or returning to Boston. Elana had been recruited for a job in Boston, but had wished for a clear sign that moving back was the right decision. The day she was scheduled to call and commit, James received an email from the associate medical director here at BHCHP, letting him know about a job opening. He immediately forwarded the email to his fiancée, asking, "Is this the sign you were looking for?"

James has come full circle—starting as a national service volunteer, working as a case manager, and now providing clinical care to patients as a PA. He hopes to learn as much as he can as a clinician and is thinking about pursuing a Masters in Public Health and policy work in the future. We are so happy to have him back.

We are also hoping to see more successful "graduates" of our program return as clinicians. From this year's team, five have been accepted to

medical or osteopathic medical schools, one will be starting a PA program, and another will be attending graduate school for social work. We'll be waiting for them when they are done. ■

A nation-wide program that has had nearly 800,000 participants since 1994, **AmeriCorps** engages individuals in intensive community service with non-profits, local organizations, schools, and more. Community HealthCorps® is the largest, health-focused AmeriCorps program in the U.S. and was designed to increase access to and utilization of health care for America's underserved, while developing tomorrow's health care workforce. BHCHP now has 11 full-time AmeriCorps/Community HealthCorps® members who provide specialized case management, health education, and tobacco cessation support and each year we receive 200-300 applications to fill our team. A particular focus in our recruitment these days is with veterans and military family members as we strive to support the nation's efforts to put men and women returning from service to work.

## CONNECT WITH BHCHP ONLINE

Read our patient stories and learn how to get involved at [www.bhchp.org](http://www.bhchp.org)



Subscribe to our **YouTube** channel

Follow us on **Twitter** @BHCHP for daily updates

Like us on **Facebook** and keep up with BHCHP news

**Founded in 1985**, BHCHP **employs** the professional medical staff that **manages** the clinics and **delivers** the comprehensive health care at most of greater Boston's adult, family and domestic violence shelters (Pine Street Inn, The New England Center for Homeless Veterans, St. Francis House, and more than 80 others).\* BHCHP is the hands and face of health care for over 12,000 homeless adults and children each year at sites as diverse as Crittenton Women's Union and the crawl space under the Longfellow Bridge. BHCHP has operated in-the-black while delivering *medicine that matters* to Boston's most vulnerable population for almost 30 years.

In addition, BHCHP staffs, manages and delivers comprehensive health care at 2 hospital-based clinics on the campuses of Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Medical Center and at a clinic on the backstretch at Suffolk Downs Racetrack. BHCHP also staffs, manages and operates our own 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 a shelter or on the street and would otherwise require prolonged and costly hospitalization in the acute care rooms of Boston's hospitals.

When you support BHCHP you reach children and adults throughout greater Boston's entire safety net community when they are not only homeless but also sick. ■

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\* **A partial list of BHCHP's partners includes:** Above & Beyond/Brookview, Anchor Inn, Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Boston Family Shelter, Boston Living Center, Boston Medical Center, Bridge to Recovery, Brookview House, Cardinal Medeiros Center, Carolina Hills Shelter, Casa Esperanza, Casa Nueva Vida, Church of the Advent, Crittenton Women's Union, Crossroads, DOVE, Entre Familia, Families in Transition, Father Bill's & Mainspring, Finex House, Horizons for Homeless Children, Housing Families, Inc., Kingston House, Latinas y Niños, Lindemann Mental Health Center, Long Island Shelter, Margaret's House, Massachusetts General Hospital, Massachusetts Mental Health Center, Nazareth Residence, New England Center for Homeless Veterans, Paul Sullivan Housing, Pilgrim Shelter, Pine Street Inn, Project Hope, Project SOAR, Renewal House, Revision House, Rosie's Place, Safe Harbor, Sojourner House, South End Community Health Center, St. Francis House, St. Mary's Women's Center for Women and Children, St. Ambrose, The Eighth Pole at Suffolk Downs, The Women's Lunch Place, and Woods-Mullen Shelter

**You Can Make a Big Difference With a Small Gift**

You can make a big difference in the health and comfort of a homeless man, woman or child with a small gift. You can't imagine how much these items help our caregivers establish and maintain contact or how much our patients appreciate your kindness.

We can never have too many of these items.

- new white socks
- new underwear (men's and women's)
- diapers
- sneakers
- toiletries
- flip-flops
- gift cards:
  - CVS (\$5 and up)
  - Dunkin' Donuts (\$5 and up)
  - McDonald's (\$5 and up)
  - Stop & Shop (\$20 and up)

**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 Alyssa Brassil at **857.654.1046** for more information, to find out about other "Small Gift" needs or to make arrangements for delivery.

**YOUR SUPPORT WILL BRING...**

the **Healing** comfort of a respite bed for a woman with severe skin abscesses with no other place to recuperate.

the **Dignity** of a talking glucometer for a young man who is newly blind and wishes to independently manage his diabetes.

the **Trust** developed between a nurse practitioner and her patients who attend the weekly Transgender clinic for primary care and behavioral health services.

the **Hope** that a Community Support Worker can instill in a patient who is struggling with addiction, but seeking treatment at a local methadone clinic.

Donate Now

[www.bhchp.org](http://www.bhchp.org)

## ON THE FRONT LINES...

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Homelessness among veterans, which grew dramatically after Vietnam, has been an ongoing concern for decades. In an age of renewed military activity and heightened conflict, many advocates expect that a new wave of veterans will appear among our nation's homeless population.

## Russell is a representation of their ability to succeed at being well again and a confirmation that seeking solutions to problems is a sign of their strength.

While benefits are available to most veterans through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there are many clients that NECHV encounters who do not yet receive these benefits, either because they do not qualify or they need assistance to access them.

That's where BHCHP comes in.

Staffed by a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary team, BHCHP's clinic at NECHV provides both acute and primary care to veterans housed in the Center.

Because of the breadth of services available at the Center—case management, housing assistance, behavioral health and addiction services, as well as education and training—BHCHP staff members can focus on providing medical care knowing that they have the ability to tap into the NECHV's services to share in the care of their clients.

Every day the clinic staff bears witness to the physical and psychological impact of war on service men and women. For Front Desk Manager, **Russell Davis**, the impact is personal.

Russell Davis' service in the US Army uniquely qualifies him for his position as the clinic's Front Desk Manager. Russell served tours in Korea and Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Because he is the first person to meet patients, veterans immediately recognize him as one of their own. He is responsible for enrolling new patients in MassHealth insurance, scheduling appointments, and managing the flow of the clinic.

Each and every day he wears his infantry pin on his shirt collar, a reminder to all who have served, that Russell shares their experience. Russell's veteran-status plays a key role in helping BHCHP's providers engage homeless veterans in care.

He brings with him a sort of cultural competency—knowledge of language, customs, and values that only veterans share.

Russell is a representation of their ability to succeed at being well again and a confirmation that seeking solutions to problems is a sign of their strength. ■



(L-R) Russell Davis; Kristin Hirth, RN; Geren Stone, MD; and Andrea Caputo, NP  
(missing: Jane Staunton, RN and Sharon Morrison, RN)

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MEDICINE THAT MATTERS



Russell paying his respects to two fallen soldiers and friends during his tour in Iraq.

## ON THE FRONT LINES OF HEALTH CARE: *CARING FOR BOSTON'S HOMELESS VETERANS*

**Can you imagine** serving your country and when you were finished having no place to live?

This is the reality of the more than 700 service men and women who are cared for at Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP)'s clinic within the New England Center for Homeless Veterans (NECHV)—New England's largest and oldest resource provider, devoted to offering an array of services for veterans of every era who face challenges and are at-risk for homelessness.

The Center provides services that designed to enable success, reintegration, meaningful employment and independent living to any veteran of the United States military regardless of branch, length of service, or discharge status.

For over a decade, BHCHP and NECHV have collaborated to ensure that all veterans have access to the high quality health care services they need to survive and be well.

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