



Spring 2018

# THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

## Our Story

Since 1985, Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program has been delivering exceptional medical and behavioral health services to homeless individuals and families in Greater Boston. Each year, BHCHP provides care for over 11,000 patients where they are, whether in the streets and back alleys; at our over 45 clinics in adult, family, and domestic violence shelters; at our two hospital-based clinics at Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston Medical Center; and in our 124-bed medical respite facilities, the Barbara McInnis House and the Stacy Kirkpatrick House. BHCHP is proud to work alongside local, state, and federal public health and homeless advocates to respond quickly to the changing needs of our patients.

We continuously strive to understand and improve the health and health status of all homeless persons with our Institute for Research, Quality, and Policy, a collaborative center for research, quality improvement, education, advocacy, and public policy.

BHCHP is an international leader in the field of homeless medicine. When you give to BHCHP, you support the direct care of our most vulnerable neighbors and help assure the highest quality of health care for homeless persons wherever they are.

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## Meeting our patients wherever they are

A message from CEO, Barry Bock, and President, Dr. Jim O'Connell



We're happy to see the delightful glimpses of Spring ahead!

Fluctuating temperatures made this past winter challenging for our patients, who may have been unprepared for those frigid drops in temperature, leading to cases of hypothermia and frostbite. Whatever conditions our patients endure, rest assured we are committed to meeting them wherever they are, trying to prevent cold-related injuries and providing the best possible care while offering hope for a healthier future.

In this newsletter, we're pleased to present a story about our longtime friend, Dr. Eileen Reilly, a psychiatrist with our Street Team. Eileen joins us through our collaboration with the Massachusetts Mental Health Center, part of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health.

For the 16 years that Eileen has been part of our Street Team, she and other

team members have brought access to much needed behavioral health care to individuals suffering on the streets, in alleys and under bridges, those people "lost in plain sight." Eileen's skilled yet gentle approach with these patients is remarkable!

You will also read about our very popular health fairs, which we host in collaboration with our clinic partner sites. These engaging events enable us to effectively reach out and provide access to vital care. Our creative and enthusiastic staff and volunteers design each health fair to address the needs of that specific patient group by combining a festive and casual atmosphere with health care access. It's truly gratifying to see our patients so joyful, and to provide care in these pleasant health fair settings.

As we continue to innovate and develop new ways to ensure access to those experiencing homelessness in Boston, we are forever grateful for your steadfast support. Your trust in our work allows us to offer integrated, highly skilled health care to those most in need.

**Thank you.**

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many clinics. Eileen's presence had an immediate effect on improving our care for our street patients and, 16 years later, we couldn't imagine our Street Team without her.

Eileen works for the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) and divides her time between BHCHP's Street Team, working for DMH at the Pine Street Inn and St. Francis House, and her office work at MMHC. The rest of the Street Team is comprised of three doctors, another psychiatrist, a nurse and nurse practitioner, a benefits coordinator, an addiction recovery coach, Mass. General Hospital psychiatry residents, and a few incredibly dedicated volunteers.

How does she get strangers on the street to open up to her about deeply personal and often traumatic experiences? Eileen stresses that consistency and gentleness are key, along with providing for a patient's basic needs. She shared a story about an older woman who, day after day, sat on the same bench at South Station. Whenever Eileen approached her, asking how she was or if she needed anything, the woman would hold an umbrella over her face, refusing to speak. After several attempts, Eileen got an idea.

"Can I get you some lunch?" Eileen asked.

"Hamburger, French fries, and a coke," the woman said suddenly. Eileen got her the meal and the two began to build a relationship, allowing Eileen and the rest of the Street Team to better meet her needs.

Eileen and other members of the team often bring hats, gloves, scarves, and even gift cards for McDonald's or Dunkin' Donuts to help engage the people they meet on the street. These items or funds to purchase them are given to us by BHCHP's generous donors. They may seem incidental, but they can be lifesaving to folks on the streets.

"That's a really good way to engage people, because most people on the street need a new pair of socks and would

appreciate a gift card, especially when it's cold or wet outside. Then they can go in and have a cup of coffee, be able to buy something with the gift card. They are always very grateful."

Luckily, Eileen has an impressive resume working with Boston's most vulnerable neighbors. As a college senior, Eileen volunteered one day at the Pine Street Inn clinic where she assisted none other than Barbara McInnis, the nurse who also trained Dr. Jim O'Connell, and for whom the Barbara McInnis House medical respite facility is named. Eileen wasn't sure she would return the second day, but Barbara's compassionate and compelling manner inspired her. That began Eileen's lifelong career in caring for homeless individuals, which included founding Women's Lunch Place, and she went on to earn her medical degree and did a residency in psychiatry.

For people living on the street, complicated behavioral health issues can include schizophrenia, major depression, bipolar disorder, substance use, and anxiety disorders. For many of our patients, existing behavioral health issues lead to their life on the streets and the harsh realities and traumas of homelessness exacerbate their condition.

**Eileen says she loves being on the BHCHP Street Team, working directly in the community, the camaraderie and variety of the settings and, ultimately, helping to relieve her patients from suffering.**

According to Eileen, the best part of her job is, "when I go out to the MMHC waiting room and see someone who's been out on the street for 20 years sitting in the waiting room, because I know they are off the street, in housing and they're waiting to see me as an office patient."



Emerging Leaders Board members Betsy Gwin and Stephanie Maneikis (L-R) talk to community members about BHCHP at The Winter Walk.

## Emerging Leaders Inspire the Community

Heading into their third year, the Emerging Leaders Board is busier than ever! Made up of 21 young professionals who are committed to supporting BHCHP's mission, the board participates in a variety of volunteer opportunities and fundraising activities. For the holidays, board members and other young professionals, known as Ambassadors, gathered winter weather

gear and wrapped the presents for patients at the Barbara McInnis House, to help make the holidays cheery and bright for our patients, many of whom spend the holidays alone.

Board Members hosted the fourth event in their successful Speaker Series. The events combine networking with a talk from a local luminary who is dedicated to some combination of business, government, health care, and philanthropy. This talk featured BHCHP alum and commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Dr. Monica Bharel. Formerly the Chief Medical Officer of BHCHP, Commissioner Bharel's talk drew an engaged audience of over 50 young professionals, who gathered to hear the commissioner speak about her work and how her time at BHCHP informs the decisions she makes at the state level every day.

The board has stayed busy with volunteering and raising awareness of our work. Emerging Leaders volunteered and walked in the inspiring Winter Walk. In addition to enjoying the walk, board members tabled for BHCHP, sharing information about our valuable work with Winter Walk attendees. The board also hosted a successful networking happy hour for young professionals interested in learning more about BHCHP and how to get involved in our work. Finally, the Board hosted a karaoke night at the Barbara McInnis House, to engage with patients and stay connected to our work. Over 20 volunteers participated in a lively night of karaoke.

Looking ahead, the board is already hard at work planning their Fall Soiree, a celebratory night of philanthropy and fun that benefits BHCHP. Their board's largest event of the year, the 2018 Soiree is shaping up to be better than ever! Soiree details will be coming soon!



# Health Fairs: Building Community and Connecting Patients to Care



BHCHP nurse Toni checks on a young patient at a Family Team health fair.

In 2017, BHCHP hosted over 50 health fairs for our 11,000+ patients. We hold them at our home facility at 780 Albany Street in the South End and at many of our 45+ clinic locations throughout Boston, including Bridge Over Troubled Waters and St. Mary's Center for Women and Children. These fairs help us reach as many people experiencing homelessness as possible.

## Health fairs are a friendly way to connect patients to care.

Health fairs combine a festive atmosphere with convenient access to health care necessities. It's also a great opportunity to reach new patients who may not be receiving care. Working with a variety of our partners, our staff can target different geographic locations and patient populations.

## 2 DAYS

We recently added a second day at our women's clinic at St. Anthony's Shrine in Boston

Most of our health fairs provide food, raffle prizes, and even haircuts to attract attendees. At the same time, staff, fellows, volunteers, and Consumer Advisory Board members from across the program offer services geared toward smoking cessation, nutrition, family planning, STI screening, Narcan training, mammograms, and flu shots. When possible, we are able to include therapy dogs to create an environment that is welcoming and stress-relieving for our patients, who have to face so many hurdles every day while navigating homelessness.

At each fair, the health care offerings, food, and prizes are tailored to the specific population. For example, at a health fair for families, we collaborated with the Fresh Truck to bring nutritious groceries, and we provided child care so that the parents could participate in the fair while their children played.

Activities at **HER Saturday** (Health, Empowerment, Resources), our weekly Saturday morning health fair for women at 780 Albany Street, include manicures, beading, and a writing group, while primary care, pap smears, and counseling are simultaneously offered on-site.

BHCHP's clinicians at **Bridge Over Troubled Waters**, our partner site that works with youth experiencing homelessness, regularly host health fairs for our younger patients. Dr. Aura Obando, who organizes many of these successful events says, "These events provide our patients with such valuable resources and dignifying services, including countless visits for women's health, smoking cessation, oral health, overdose prevention, transgender health, and behavioral health."



Clinical staff member Nebby and teen patients spend time with a therapy dog at our health fair for young people at Bridge Over Troubled Waters.

**La Fiesta de la Salud**, a health fair aimed at the Spanish-speaking population in the wake of the hurricanes in Puerto Rico, was organized by BHCHP's Immigration Health Committee. Spanish speaking staff and volunteers offered health care services, Cuban food was served, patients wrote notes of solidarity to folks in Puerto Rico, and community partners provided information about legal services, workers' rights and other Spanish-language services.



A Spanish-speaking Physical Therapy student volunteers at La Fiesta de la Salud by giving soothing hand massages to patients.

HER Saturday Clinic Coordinator Zoe Burns says, "The women of HER Saturday have grown to deeply trust our staff and volunteers, allowing us to share in their greatest joys and their most difficult struggles. The clinic is a place of hope, gratitude, and truly lives up to its name—providing Health-Empowerment-Resources."

And what do our patients think of our health fairs? Women who attend HER Saturday describe it as, "a peaceful, happy environment," and "a getaway from homeless time." And that welcoming sense of community is paying off—attendance ranges from 40-70 women a week.

We love that our patients feel a sense of community at our health fairs. When patients have ease of access and are comfortable with their providers, they are more likely to stay connected to the integrated medical and behavioral health care that BHCHP provides for so many.



Volunteer Joyce gives haircuts to moms at a Family Team fair at St. Mary's Center for Women and Children.

# Share the Hope: the Dennis Buff Bequest Society

In November 2009, BHCHP received a poignant and unexpected bequest from Dennis Buff, a long-time and well-known patient who had died a few months earlier. Dennis was our first patient to leave a bequest to BHCHP and his remarkable story is the inspiration for our **Dennis Buff Bequest Society**.

Dennis's bequest reminds us that:

- We are fortunate to serve individuals like him.
- We can never give up on any of our patients.
- We are, in the fullest sense, family for many of those we serve.
- One does not have to be wealthy to make a bequest of enduring importance.
- Without our support, people like Dennis would not receive the care they need.

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*You, too, can leave an enduring legacy by supporting BHCHP's vital work through a charitable bequest gift. To learn more about bequests, please contact Sara Pacelle at 857.654.1052 or [spacelle@bhchp.org](mailto:spacelle@bhchp.org).*

Thank you!

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## COME VISIT US! YOU'LL BE AMAZED!

Visitors who have toured our clinical and respite program at 780 Albany Street tell us how inspiring it is to see our compassionate and skilled care firsthand. We love to show off our work! Tours take about an hour. We are happy to host you or your group (up to 10 people) on the following dates:

**Monday, June 4 at 11 am**

**Tuesday, July 10 at 9 am**

**Wednesday, August 22 at 2 pm**

**Thursday, September 20 at 9 am**

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*Please RSVP for one of these tour dates by contacting Sara Pacelle at [spacelle@bhchp.org](mailto:spacelle@bhchp.org) or 857.654.1052. If these dates do not work for you, we will happily schedule a visit that does work. We await your visit!*



Sox for Socks volunteers collect socks at last year's event at Fenway Park.

## Sox for Socks Season is Here!

Each year, dedicated community groups, corporate partners, and individuals collect thousands of socks for our patients. Why are socks so important? Many people experiencing homelessness 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 which can lead to more serious health problems. Keeping feet clean and dry is the best way to prevent such conditions.

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### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The transition from homelessness to housing can be daunting. That was the case for our respite patient, Grace\*, who was undergoing chemotherapy for ovarian cancer while staying at our Barbara McInnis House. Still recuperating from her treatments and transitioning into housing, Grace needed continued support. While on a home health visit with Grace, our nurse Yolanda was dismayed to see that Grace had no food in her apartment. This is where YOU come in. Yolanda was able to purchase essential food items for Grace with a donated grocery gift card.

You can make a BIG difference in the health and comfort of someone like Grace with a small gift.

We can never have too many of the following items:

- new underwear (men's and women's)
- women's sports bras
- baseball hats and sunscreen
- diapers
- toiletry items and care kits
- \$5-25 gift cards:
  - CVS
  - Stop & Shop
  - Target
  - Walgreens
  - Dunkin' Donuts

Donations like these allow us the flexibility to provide urgent support for our patients. Our providers go above and beyond to meet the needs of our vulnerable patients every day, but they often face roadblocks.

By donating these items to our program or organizing a drive in your community or workplace, you join the ever-growing network of support within our BHCHP community.

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Contact Madeline Burns at 857.654.1044 or [mburns@bhchp.org](mailto:mburns@bhchp.org) to find out about other ways to help or check our website [www.bhchp.org/ongoing-needs](http://www.bhchp.org/ongoing-needs). Thank you!

\*Name changed to protect the privacy of the patient.

For the 13th year, The Red Sox Foundation and NESN will team up with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program to collect new, white socks from fans attending the Red Sox vs. Seattle Mariners games at Fenway Park the weekend of **June 22-24**. If you are attending the games that weekend, please consider bringing socks with you! We will have collection tables just inside each of the park entrances.

Don't have tickets to the games? Join our largest sock drive supporter, the **Boston Red Sox**, by hosting your own **Sox for Socks** drive to collect new socks for individuals and families living in shelters and on the streets. Host a sock drive at your company, with a school group, or on your own for a simple, fun way to make a difference.

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

 **53 YEARS**

The average age of death for our street patients living outside is 53 years old



# Announcements

## BHCHP Crosses the Finish Line

Through the generosity of the John Hancock Non-Profit Partners Program, Team BHCHP ran in the 2018 Boston Marathon. Congratulations to Todd Foy and Katherine Record on crossing the finish line and raising over \$20,000 to support our program! We are deeply grateful for their hard work and the donors who supported them.

Interested in joining Team BHCHP for the 2019 Boston Marathon? Applications will be available on the BHCHP website this Fall.



## Second Winter Walk a Success

On Sunday, February 11, BHCHP was thrilled to once again participate in the 2nd Annual Winter Walk to raise awareness and help end homelessness in Greater Boston. Over 1,000 people, both housed and unhoused, gathered in the freezing rain for a two-mile walk, community breakfast, and storytelling.

BHCHP is grateful to be one of five partners that the Winter Walk supports. Our BHCHP team of volunteers, staff, family and friends did our part to help the Walk raise over \$120,000! Learn more about the Winter Walk at [www.winterwalkboston.org](http://www.winterwalkboston.org).



## The Kraft CareZone Van Mobilizes Care for Opioid Use Disorder to Boston's Most Vulnerable

BHCHP is an integral part of a new community outreach initiative spearheaded by The Kraft Center for Community Health at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). CareZone, a mobile health van and first of its kind in New England, focuses on providing

health care and harm reduction services in areas known to have high rates of fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses in Boston. In addition to BHCHP, The Kraft Center is partnering with the GE Foundation, and Boston Public Health Commission's AHOPE program, with support from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, The Hearst Foundation, Partners HealthCare and Ford Motor Company.

The goal is to increase access to addiction and health care services, engaging individuals in recovery and connecting them with long-term, community-based care. BHCHP Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jessie Gaeta is the van's medical director. BHCHP clinicians alongside AHOPE's harm reduction team staff the van five days a week in neighborhoods in need of the van's on-demand, preventative care and low-threshold treatment for substance use disorder.

# Tragedy Hits Home

## REMEMBERING CHRISTINE LOEBER



BHCHP is deeply saddened at the tragic loss of Christine Loeber, who lost her

life recently during a hostage crisis in California. Christine was the Executive Director of the Pathway Home, which treats veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. She was a bright light in our BHCHP development

and research departments from 2002-2007. With Dr. O'Connell and others, she edited the widely used manual *The Health Care of Homeless Persons*. Christine embraced our mission and pursued a Master's degree in Social Work at Boston College while continuing to work part-time with us. She was committed to caring for women and veterans, particularly with PTSD.

We grieve the loss of this remarkable and compassionate person, who we were fortunate to know. We offer our most sincere condolences to Christine's loved ones. Finally, we wish to share that we are naming our clinic at the New England Center and Home for Veterans in honor of Christine.

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*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.

For additional information please contact: Linda O'Connor, Director of Development (loconnor@bhchp.org) at 857.654.1050 or Sara Pacelle, Associate Director of Development (spacelle@bhchp.org) at 857.654.1052.

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



**700**

Our Family Team sees  
700 children a year for  
medical care and case  
management services

## Taking Behavioral Health Care to the Streets



Dr. Eileen Reilly talks with a patient on the streets of Boston.

When you picture a psychiatrist's office, what do you see? Probably a couch, inside a nice warm and private room, perhaps with some book shelves and tissues. If you ask Dr. Eileen Reilly, an esteemed psychiatrist and beloved member of BHCHP's Street Team, and a mainstay of caring for Boston's homeless population for over 30 years, she'd say a park bench or a coffee shop would work just fine for her patient visits.

For our patients on the Street Team, fearfulness and paranoia are common. Many people experiencing homelessness have endured unspeakable trauma and talking to a psychiatrist

about that can trigger more trauma. They might be in denial or defensive about their own mental illness and have negative assumptions about psychiatric care.

When you meet Eileen, you can understand how her soft spoken and caring demeanor is appealing to our vulnerable street patients. She says her initial engagement with patients is very casual and conversational. "How are you doing today?" "Is there anything I can do for you?" she might ask someone sitting on a park bench. Eileen calls engaging those living on the street an art, for behavioral health care in particular, and says you have to, "know when to back off and know when to be pushy. And the longer you do it, the better you get."

She may offer them a warm cup of coffee, or pair of socks as ways to engage. Our patients respond to her gentle and friendly overtures that help Eileen to earn their trust. It may take weeks, months, or even years until patients are comfortable enough to completely open up and receive psychiatric care, but the hope is that those she sees on the street will eventually accept treatment and may one day be housed.

Our good fortune to have Eileen's tremendous expertise on our street team began in 2002, when BHCHP and Massachusetts Mental Health Center (MMHC) collaborated to write a 3-year grant to embed behavioral health care into our Street Team primary care, allowing us to offer our street patients the same integrated behavioral health that was already available at our

*continued inside on page 2*