Funders Spotlight: One Door to Medical, Dental and Behavioral Health Care at Erie

The communities Erie serves have traditionally faced limited access to not only medical, but also oral and behavioral health care. Left untreated, all of these health concerns can lead to higher costs and long-term challenges. In response, Erie is bringing together doctors, dentists, and behavioral health therapists as partners to coordinate the care of behavioral, oral, and physical conditions. This innovative model helps to ensure that high-need patients will have seamless access to all of the critical services they need. Erie’s model stands apart because it brings together oral, medical, and behavioral health into one holistic system of care.

Erie’s program engages the patient’s trusted medical provider in introducing these services and making them readily available on the same day, helping to eliminate perceived stigma and fear that could pose barriers to care. The first line of care occurs during the primary care medical visit, when the providers screen all patients for behavioral and oral health needs. Those who require behavioral health services receive immediate attention from a licensed behavioral health clinician, who ensures each patient receives appropriate care, ranging from continued brief consultations to long-term therapy.

This year we are expanding this effort to all Erie sites and are also adding psychiatric care on site for both treatment of complex patients and consultation with medical providers. For oral health, Erie is placing oral health care coordinators within patient registration at our newer health centers in Evanston/Skokie and Waukegan to provide navigation and consultation for enrolling in oral health services directly following their primary care visit. These coordinators will be available for on-the-spot oral health assessments and scheduling with a dentist. By offering a warm hand off to a behavioral health therapist or dentist, Erie is ensuring that more and more patients have access to, and will follow through with, the important care that they need to become healthier and happier.

We would not be able to achieve these outcomes without the significant investments of our funding partners, including some early investors like the Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation. The following are supporting our oral and behavioral health programs, along with our integrated efforts, at $10,000 and above (alphabetically): Anonymous; Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois; Chicago Department of Public Health; Chicago White Sox Community Fund, a McCormick Foundation Fund; Colgate-Palmolive Company; Delta Dental; Evanston Community Foundation; Grant Healthcare Foundation; Healthy Smiles, Healthy Children: The Foundation of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry; Illinois Children’s Healthcare Foundation; Lake County CDBG; Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; Ortho S.A. Sprague Memorial Institute (Northwestern); Siragusa Foundation; Tom Russell Charitable Foundation; and Walmart Foundation. Erie is grateful to these and all of the other generous supporters of our integrated care model. Thank you!
October 2016 E-Spotlight

Health Promotions Spotlight: Lending Hands for Life

More than 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV – but many are still unaware of their infection and remain undiagnosed and untreated. In order for patients to learn how to stay healthy and live a long life with HIV/AIDS, Erie Family Health Center offers HIV-positive patients Lending Hands for Life, a multi-faceted program that provides access to life-saving medication to mental health care, linkages to housing, employment, food and nutrition resources, and much more.

Lending Hands for Life (LHL), based at Erie Humboldt Park Health Center, was started in 1989. With the support of Erie’s LHL staff and providers, patients navigate difficult topics such as transmission of the disease, Illinois laws around HIV/AIDS, and the importance of taking their medication and routinely following up with their doctor for their care.

Bridget Magner, manager of the LHL program, along with the rest of the LHL team, works with patients to ensure their needs are being met. “At Erie, we have close relationships with our patients,” Bridget said. “When they come here, they know they’re not just a number. Our team knows their name; we know their story.”

Each and every one of Erie’s LHL patients receives regular reminders about their next appointment, including STI testing, PAP smears, and even flu vaccinations. Program participants also receive dental care, optometry services, support groups, assistance with insurance enrollment, personalized health education, emergency food vouchers – and much, much more.

As of March 2016, PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, was also introduced into the program. PrEP is a way for those who do not have HIV, but who are at risk of becoming infected, to prevent the infection by taking a daily pill. If someone is exposed to HIV, the medicine can work to keep the virus from establishing itself in the body. PrEP is a powerful intervention tool, and LHL staff work hard to ensure that those that are at high risk for the infection can receive access to this medication, regardless of their income level or insurance status.

There are currently 351 patients enrolled in LHL, and new referrals into the program come in all the time. In response to the growing demand for services, and in recognition that patients living in the northern suburbs would be better served at an additional location, Lending Hands for Life expanded to a satellite clinic at Erie Foster Avenue Health Center on Chicago’s far north side. The week of October 3 was the first that the satellite clinic was open, offering HIV primary care, laboratory services, behavioral health services, and case management for HIV-positive patients.

On October 1, LHL staff and patients also participated in the program’s annual outing to the AIDS Run & Walk, hosted by the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, held at Soldier Field. The Run & Walk helps to raise funds and awareness about HIV/AIDS.

“People care so much about this cause,” said Bridget. “It was soaking wet that Saturday, but there was good energy – the rain could not dampen our spirits!”

Jose* is just one example of a patient whose life has greatly improved through the program. Jose was newly diagnosed HIV-positive and homeless, living in a shelter for LGBTQ youth in Humboldt Park. He also struggled with mental health issues. But ever since he was referred into Lending Hands for Life, he’s not only received care for his HIV, but has been working closely with a case manager on housing. He’s also received psychiatry services from Erie, and now his mental health – and his HIV – are much more stable.

You can help to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS by
October 2016 E-Spotlight

making a gift to LHL’s fundraising page on the 2016 AIDS Run & Walk website.

Donate Now!

*name changed to protect patient privacy

Nurse Spotlight: Martha Glynn, FNP

Martha Glynn, Family Nurse Practitioner at Erie Family Health Center, has dedicated her career to helping diverse communities access the holistic care they need, supporting young people in staying healthy and achieving their goals, and advocating for health justice.

Martha first discovered Erie in 1999, while doing her clinical work for her family nurse practitioner program at Frazier Elementary, located in Chicago’s challenged North Lawndale neighborhood. There she realized her passion for providing primary care and ensuring the highest quality programs and services in underserved communities. She spent the next few years providing women’s health care and family planning services for a predominately low-income Hispanic population.

Martha rejoined Erie in 2005 to become a clinician at Erie’s school based and adolescent sites. That was the beginning of more than a decade of Martha’s offering her clinical skills and steadfast support to her patients, staff, and the communities she serves. Today she is the medical director at Erie’s five school-based sites and Erie Teen Health Center. Together these six centers serve more than 6,000 patients a year and have established Erie as a leading provider of school-based and adolescent services in the City of Chicago.

Martha has distinguished herself not only through her practical skills but also her holistic approach. For example, when patients at Frazier were coming in with chronic headaches and stomachaches, she knew there was probably something else going on. So she engaged four other Chicago-area health centers to develop a comprehensive annual patient self-assessment with items ranging from school performance, to bike helmet use to food insecurity. These assessments, still used today, have started countless discussions about sick parents, fear, grief and other critical topics and helped establish Erie’s school-based sites and Teen Center as safe havens for some of Chicago’s most at-risk young people.

Martha is most proud of establishing long-term relationships with her patients. Sometimes these connections are life-changing, like for the patient she saw cared for through adolescence, teen pregnancy, birth and now graduate school. Martha mentored this patient through these many transitions and continuously challenges her staff to encourage their own patients this same way. As one colleague marveled, “I’ve never heard a provider talk to a patient about college before!” But for Martha, it’s all part of high-quality patient care.

Martha has impacted countless young lives through her expert medical ability and non-judgmental empathic approach. She has cared for at least 20 patients with gunshot wounds, many coming directly from the ER to get checked out at Erie. Because of Martha, they knew they would receive the support they needed during this most traumatic time.

Most recently, Martha was awarded the Primary Health Care Clinician Devotion Award at the Illinois Primary Health Care Association’s (IPHCA) Annual Leadership Conference on October 5 for her commitment to Erie’s youngest patients. She was the catalyst for groundbreaking advocacy around lead poisoning after identifying elevated lead levels among multiple children with elevated blood lead levels in one family. When she learned that they were living in a Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) building and not able to leave without losing their voucher, Martha approached the Health Justice Project (HJP) attorneys for assistance. As the first to bring legal attention to this issue, Martha and other Erie providers joined HJP to advocate with the CHA to revise their regulations. This partnership has not only enabled the family to move to a safer location but generated extensive media coverage, a Senate bill sponsored by Senator Durbin, and reconsideration of national standards regarding lead levels.
Thanks to Martha, Erie is helping lessen the impact of lead in low-income communities as well as building trust and providing critical holistic care to Chicago’s young people.

“It’s the patients here who inspire me,” she said. “With every expression of gratitude I receive from them, it reaffirms that this is the work I’m meant to do.”

Your contribution ensures that Erie’s services will remain accessible and affordable for anyone who needs them. Thank you for giving our patients hope for a healthier future.

Donate Now!

If you have a question about donating to Erie or the programs your support helps make possible, please contact Kate Birdwell at 312.432.7440 or e-mail her at kbirdwell@eriefamilyhealth.org.