



Summer 2022 eNewsletter

We are grateful to share with you the following stories of LCHC's impact in our community. Your support makes this work possible.

Thank you.



Booster Shots | Caring For All Ages

Earlier this year, Natasha and Josiah, mother and son, came to LCHC's Pediatrics clinic to get their COVID-19 booster shots. This hadn't been an easy decision — she and her son have underlying medical conditions that made her hesitant. Despite her family's opposition to the vaccine, she researched the effects and types of vaccination carefully on her own before opting to get her son vaccinated and later boosted. When asked how she chose LCHC for the shots, she said it was an obvious decision. LCHC has been her medical home since she was a teenager.

Natasha now encourages everyone to get the vaccination and the booster shot. She believes she made a good choice: her COVID-19 vaccine was effective and she didn't experience any side effects. Natasha shared that without the vaccination she wasn't sure if she would be standing here today.

Natasha's six-year-old son Josiah was afraid of the needle at first. He clung to his mom and hid his face, but Dr. Andre Garcia's cheerful demeanor soon calmed him down. A beaming smile spread across his face as Dr. Garcia, who spends most of his time at LCHC as a Dentist, complimented his Spiderman hat and told him a secret: he could choose two free books instead of one. Dr. Garcia fist bumped Josiah after he courageously accepted his vaccine. Josiah's focus quickly turned to claiming his prize from the table full of free books. He pointed to his arm and declared, "It didn't hurt at all, Mommy!"

Throughout the spring and summer, LCHC has been giving out about 50 vaccines daily to patients like Natasha and Josiah. LCHC's COVID response team has pulled staff from across its clinic, including dentists like Dr. Garcia, to respond to the needs in our community and ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines and tests. This has required LCHC's staff to be flexible and responsive.

Early in 2020, Dr. Garcia was one of two staff that operated LCHC's mobile COVID-19 testing van, offering rapid tests to LCHC's homeless shelter patients and partners before they were widely available. During this time he had a newborn son and was extremely careful to disinfect himself after each shift. These days, Dr. Garcia splits his time between the Pediatric clinic and the Dental clinic, which brings him a sense of fulfillment.

Dr. Garcia remains impressed by the number of patients coming to get vaccinated and the way each staff person has stepped up to run a smooth vaccine operation. "It shows that our outreach is working well," he says. As LCHC's CEO James Brooks mentioned in an interview with Chicago Tonight, existing relationships and outreach to community members are crucial to getting more residents from North Lawndale vaccinated.

It's the goal of each of our staff to build these relationships with patients starting from a young age.



Supporting Staff Wellness | Juneteenth Celebration

Juneteenth marks the emancipation of enslaved African Americans on June 19th, 1865. James Brooks, Lawndale Christian Health Center's CEO, describes its significance: "When we think about July Fourth, we remember that at that time our people were still enslaved and treated as three-fifths human. But Juneteenth is our liberation day. We celebrate to acknowledge all those who came before us." With North Lawndale's connection to Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights movement, James feels an even greater sense of the holiday's significance to the North Lawndale community and LCHC's staff.

This year, the health center commemorated Juneteenth with staff and patient events, devotionals and reflections, colorful décor throughout clinic spaces, and by adding Juneteenth as an official holiday observed by the health center. Giving staff an extra day off was an easy decision for James and LCHC's leadership team. They wanted to not only acknowledge and celebrate this important day, but also highlight their priority to invest in several measures to ensure ongoing staff wellness.

James acknowledges that throughout the pandemic, staff at LCHC have faced incredible challenges in continuing to care for their patients and community. Now, as CEO, his focus is on supporting them as best he can to ensure their wellbeing. "One of my values is being in proximity. I'm very relational, I'm a connector, and I love being with people. In my role I must lean into those strengths and use them to encourage our staff," James says.

Across the country and the world, healthcare workers are facing exhaustion, burnout, and fatigue following the COVID pandemic and strains on our healthcare systems. LCHC recognizes that emotional, physical, and spiritual support for staff is more essential than ever. New initiatives are being introduced to empower LCHC employees to continue serving the healthcare needs of our neighborhoods. These initiatives include financial support for childcare needs for staff, a short sabbatical restoration leave for long-term staff, increased flexibility and more. Centering staff wellness initiatives around the issues most important to our staff reflects to our community a vision of wellness that recognizes all the essential parts of a person's wellbeing. LCHC is confident that by loving our staff well, our staff will then be equipped to live out our value of loving God and loving people.



Community in Motion | Partnerships for Health

Every person's health is tied to the health and wellbeing of their community, involving one's environment, relationships, and the systems that impact daily life. Promoting community wellness in Lawndale happens through linking arms with community partners so that together we can provide resources, education, connection, engagement, and empowerment. One such partner is Equiticity, a racial equity movement led by Oboi Reed.

Equiticity advocates for racial equity, increased mobility, and racial justice for communities like North Lawndale in cities across the United States. In Chicago, Oboi and his team have conducted research into racialized mobility inequities. He says, "Black and brown communities are pushed out of healthy activities like biking because their neighborhoods often lack the infrastructure for safe biking and are also 8 times more likely to be ticketed for minor walking or biking infractions than predominantly white neighborhoods."

Over many years, Lawndale Christian Fitness Center (LCFC) has supported Equiticity's local bike rides including the annual MLK Jr. Day ride, community walking tours, scooter rolls, and other mobility rituals that provide a safe place for the Lawndale community to participate in healthy activities. Soon, Equiticity will launch the Go Hub – a community mobility center in North Lawndale that will provide free access to devices such as e-bikes, scooters, and even electric cars. It will also be a centralized place for the community to keep engaging in regular exercise rituals.

As Oboi notes, "When rituals happen in a neighborhood, people's perception of violence goes down." This is why much of Equiticity's work has been focused on developing their consistent calendar of events and growing partnerships with organizations like LCFC. As a core focus of its work to promote health and wellness, LCFC addresses the need for safe and affordable forms of exercise in order to better the health outcomes of our patients and community. This collaborative work between LCFC and Equiticity is crucial to establishing a long-term foundation for a healthy community. Community partnerships allow the Health Center broadly to promote wellness and support the wellbeing of Lawndale and the surrounding communities.