



LAWNDALE CHRISTIAN
HEALTH CENTER

Loving God. Loving People.



2021 SPRING NEWSLETTER



LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear friends of LCHC,

Springtime is a season of hope. As the trees and flowers come alive again and the weather warms, we feel a sense of opportunity. This spring at LCHC we are thankful for the hope and opportunity that the COVID-19 vaccines bring. Our communities have been hit especially hard by the pandemic. The vaccine is a gift after a year of loss and hardship.

In this newsletter, you will read about the ways our staff advocated for their patients staying at homeless shelters to be prioritized in the vaccine rollout. We are grateful for partnership with the City of Chicago that allowed us to vaccinate over 1,000 shelter guests in the first quarter of this year.

Our senior patients have embraced the use of video and phone calls to continue having Bible studies and fitness classes while the Senior Center has been closed. You'll read reflections from Ms. Constance Lay as she describes how she has remained connected to peers and LCHC staff during this time of being physically apart.

Finally, our mission to provide affordable, quality healthcare guided by Christ's love is at the heart of all we do. We are grateful to Nancy Gilbert for sharing her story and health journey with us. Her words remind us that working with love matters. Love changes lives.

Thank you for partnering with us in all seasons. May you experience renewed hope as you read these stories.



Bruce Miller
CEO, Lawndale Christian Health Center

SHELTER PARTNERS | VACCINE SOLUTIONS

Long before vials of the COVID-19 vaccine arrived at partner homeless shelters, LCHC's Mobile Health Team has been working to provide quality healthcare to patients experiencing homelessness and to advocate for the prioritization of programs to address the healthcare needs associated with homelessness. A partnership with City leaders in 2020, which provided isolation for high-risk shelter guests at Hotel 166, opened opportunities for LCHC Mobile Health Director Dr. Tom Huggett and his team to bring these ongoing needs to the forefront of the City's COVID-19 relief and vaccination plans.

Anna Ji, Physician Assistant, has been helping lead the distribution of vaccines at LCHC's partner shelters. She and other providers from LCHC held small discussion groups with shelter guests to talk about the COVID-19 vaccine in the weeks before it arrived. "These were open conversations where each person could voice their personal experience, express concerns, and share anything they had heard about the vaccine," Anna said. "Many LCHC staff had recently received the vaccine themselves and were able to share their thoughts, struggles, and personal reasons for choosing to get vaccinated."

While the act of administering or receiving a vaccine happens in the span of just a few minutes, Anna believes that every step of the process is an opportunity for people to experience loving care. "The significance of this vaccine is something that none of us have experienced before. Many patients have shared their personal stories with me and teared up while expressing what receiving this vaccine means to them. There is an overwhelming sense of gratitude. It changes people's lives."



Since late January, LCHC has vaccinated over 1,000 people experiencing homelessness at 22 shelter sites. LCHC's advocacy efforts to prioritize high-risk patients played a significant role in Chicago being the first city to vaccinate such a high percentage of individuals experiencing homelessness. Each time LCHC providers show up to a shelter to administer vaccines, the environment is one of celebration and hope. Anna says, "People feel relieved that there is finally something they can do to address the pain and loss of the past year. This vaccine is like an outpouring of God's love."

Even when vaccine distribution has slowed, the Mobile Health Team will continue to grow its services and partner with more shelters in Chicago. As Anna notes, "there is such a great need for people experiencing homelessness to have access to a Primary Care Provider. Being involved in vaccine distribution has allowed more shelters to get to know us as a resource for ongoing care. Building these relationships is one step toward our greater goal of providing that needed access."

SENIORS STAYING CONNECTED

Connie Lay's family has grown since she first became an LCHC patient 35 years ago. Back then, she was pregnant with her daughter, and LCHC was just four exam rooms on Ogden Avenue. LCHC has expanded greatly since then, including the addition of our Senior Day Services. Now Connie would count the people at Senior Day Services as part of her expanded family.

Two years ago, Ms. Lay began experiencing depression. Staying at home without much to do was weighing heavily on her emotional and mental wellbeing. When she learned of the Senior Day Services (SDS) program at Lawndale, she jumped at the opportunity to participate. "It came like a lifeline to get me out of the dark place I was in. Since joining I can really say I've come alive again!"

Despite having to put a hold on gathering in-person for the past year, the Senior Day Services staff have stayed connected to each participant throughout the pandemic. "I get a call every single week to check in," Ms. Lay shares. "Not one week has passed when an LCHC staff member has not called. They have made me feel so special and so loved."

In recent months, SDS members and staff have set up regular virtual gatherings to be together and encourage each other in their physical, spiritual, and mental wellness. Each week, Ms. Lay participates in a 'Coffee and Chat' time, Bible study, and virtual fitness classes. The chance to share laughter, glean wisdom, and spend time with her peers has been a balm for the loneliness of the past year.



“It came like a lifeline to get me out of the dark place I was in.”

As she reflects on her time with SDS, Ms. Lay is overcome with gratitude for the compassion, respect, and warmth she's received from both staff and peers. She looks forward to the day they are able to meet again in-person, and all the ways LCHC's Senior Services will continue to change lives like hers. Ms. Lay truly believes that every senior would benefit from a program like this one. "This second family is what keeps me healthy," Ms. Lay says. "I've thanked God a thousand times for what SDS has done for me."

PANDEMIC RESPONSE



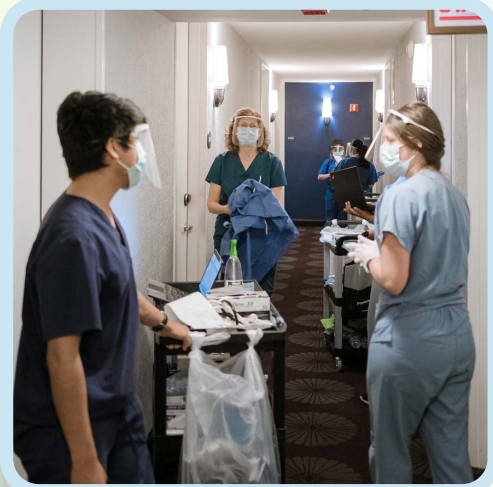
COVID-19 tests in
2021: 5,743



2021 Telehealth
visits:
33,080



Doses of vaccine
administered to date:
27,991



Patients fully
vaccinated:
11,835



2021 Medical
visits:
51,183

ENCOMPASSING CARE

In 2015, Nancy Gilbert was living at a treatment center for substance use disorder and had made the decision to become sober. After receiving a positive Hepatitis C diagnosis, she became a patient of Daniel Ozinga, Physician Assistant at Lawndale Christian Health Center. What she found at LCHC was surprising to her – medical staff who viewed their work as a calling and truly cared about her overall wellbeing. “My care team at LCHC provided the support base I needed. It went way beyond medical care – they referred me for counseling services, connected me to aftercare services when I moved out of the treatment center, helped me obtain social security, and worked hard to get me the treatment I needed to recover from Hepatitis C. All of it has been such a gift.”

In the most difficult points of her health and recovery journey, Nancy describes how the staff at LCHC helped her work out all the small, but overwhelming details related to her care. “There were so many little things that needed to be done for me to get the treatments I needed. Normally this would have left me frustrated, especially in a fragile time. But the care I was receiving really put me in a place that made me want to continue the walk of being sober and living that out.” LCHC is in an area of Chicago disproportionately impacted by substance use disorders and has worked for many years to respond to the specific needs of patients on their recovery journey.

One of the most significant barriers to quality medical care is the cost. Nancy recounts with deep gratitude how she never had to worry about being able to afford care. “The medications I needed were affordable through LCHC. At one point, I lost my Medicaid coverage. That could have been detrimental but with the sliding scale fees at LCHC, I could afford to continue with my care here.”



When she moved out of the treatment center, Nancy felt she was starting a new life – one full of hope. Years later, she continues to receive all her routine care at LCHC, including dental, pharmacy, and optometry services. “I’ve stayed because of the level of consideration, empathy, and kindness I’ve received. No matter what I’m experiencing, LCHC has treated it as important. I see this place as a resource offering hope.”

Despite the many changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused, Nancy is pleased to say that her healthcare didn’t skip a beat. “I’ve continued to feel safe coming to LCHC with all the precautions in place. I’ve also been able to have telehealth appointments when needed,” she said.

Nancy believes that LCHC is a place that seeks to meet the unique needs of its community. She says, “This organization is one that is actually living out their mission statement. There are people in this community who may otherwise fall through the cracks, but LCHC sees them and sees to their needs. I can’t say enough how the people here have been instrumental in changing my life.”



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