



# 2021 | ANNUAL REPORT

Building a healthy community one person at a time.



# LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

**NOREEN KLEINFELN WALD** RN, PHN, MA



River Valley Health Services opened their first medical clinic for the uninsured in Carver and Scott counties in September! This goal was achieved when moving out of COVID restrictions,

and we are ever so proud! We keep a full schedule seeing patients one afternoon per week. Most patients are seen for follow-up of chronic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes, while others are seen for more acute conditions that have been unattended.

Starting in the New Year, we will closely monitor a group of diabetic/pre-diabetic clients to improve their health status. We will also be establishing a communication and referral system with a major local health care provider

so that uninsured individuals have a medical home with River Valley. We are moving forward, becoming stronger, and have deepened our resources for our most vulnerable populations.

Our staff and our Director Bill Swanstrom have been incredibly flexible and creative in serving the community this past year. They deserve the biggest note of appreciation as we move into a new year. Our next note of appreciation goes to our donors; some new such as Boston Scientific, some mainstays as Carver County Public Health, local Rotary associations and local church congregations. Thank you all for your contribution!





# YEAR OF THE CLINIC

## CLINIC HOURS

**OPEN EVERY WED.  
9–11:30 AM**

**OPEN EVERY THUR.  
1–4 PM BY APPT ONLY**

**TELEHEALTH AND  
NURSE/PHYSICIAN  
VISITS AVAILABLE**

## 2021—YEAR OF THE CLINIC

- › River Valley Health Services' 2021 word-of-the-year has been "Clinic."
- › For the first time in our 17-year history, we offered both clinical and nursing services.
- › Our Chaska Clinic reopened after being closed due to COVID-19 for 18 months.
- › Our part-time staff, on-call seven days a week, finally have their home back.
- › Dr. David Willey, MD, has provided volunteer medical support for the clinic.
- › All our services, including those related to COVID-19, are FREE to our clients.

## NEW AND RENEWED ALLIANCES

- › Carver County, Boston Scientific, and Allina Health provided crucial support in the areas of our free clinic, diabetes prevention, and reducing barriers to health.
- › Carver County has been a leader in supporting a free clinic concept, helping the uninsured to access River Valley Health Services.
- › Boston Scientific Foundation has sponsored an innovation grant allowing us to reach out to the

Hispanic diabetic population which has a 2× greater risk of Type 2 diabetes.

- › We are delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the Allina Health "Social Determinants of Health" pilot program to improve whole-person care.
- › We joined the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics.

## INCREDIBLE TEAM

- › RVHS nurses, interpreters, doctor, volunteers and board members contribute without acclaim or reward. The staff bring a genuine and generous passion and pride to their profession. They are on call 24 × 7.
- › We are blessed with a talented Board Chair, Noreen Kleinfehn-Wald. Noreen has instituted a modernization of our board towards flexibility and inclusion and managed COVID-19 vaccinations as a former supervisor in Scott County.



### Bill Swanstrom

MBA, LISW, MPH, Veteran

**River Valley Health Services  
Executive Director**

Member: VFW American Legion DAV

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[Bill@rivervalleyhealthservices.org](mailto:Bill@rivervalleyhealthservices.org)

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

# CHASKA CLINIC REOPENS

Our Chaska Clinic resumed operations in August, 2021. The world goes on, and our patients still have medical issues and barriers to healthy living that need addressing—COVID-19 and its variants notwithstanding. Diabetes and pre-diabetes, both significant public health challenges, affect a substantial proportion of our patient population. In addition, we have high-risk groups, including persons over 50 with heart or lung disease and other underlying conditions. Many of our clients are vulnerable, poor, and have little or no healthcare access.

—Bill Swanstrom, Executive Director

Serving High-Risk Clients in 2021 During the Continuing COVID-19 Pandemic	
Client access seven days a week, especially those in high-risk locations and high-risk groups	Trailer parks, apartment houses, multi-family dwellings
High-risk groups with pre-existing conditions	20 times greater risk than the population for virus
COVID-19 and telehealth screenings	1416 client visits including telehealth
Telehealth assessment and screening for COVID-19 symptoms	Fever, cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, blue lips, sore throat, fatigue, headache, dry cough, pneumonia, loss of taste/smell, pre-existing conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart and lung disease and others
Telehealth screening and assessment of a client's social determinates of health	Housing, in-home safety monitoring, transportation, healthy food, infant care, clothing, medicines, household supplies, access to PPE, social support, access to low or no-cost medical care, interpreter services
PPE distributed to veterans/others	500
Vaccination referrals	200+
Client demographics	Hispanic 64.4% / Caucasian 30.6% / Other 5% Females 64.2% / Males 35.8% Age: <21 (7.2%) / 22–65 (78.7%) / >66 (14%)
County of residence	Carver County 53.% / Scott County 46% / Other 1%
Various barriers to health	Basic survival, medical, eye care, food, shelter, pharmacy
Isolation/quarantine support	Food, medications, PPE
Emergency funding for clients	Prescriptions, health care needs, transportation



A small, dedicated non-profit can be a force multiplier in leveraging its capabilities on behalf of its patients. We do this by operating as a mission-driven unit, staying within our core services, and focusing on our patients. We maximize our networks on their behalf.

We have barebones overhead, highly skilled staff, and a remarkable franchise built over eighteen years. We continued to provide our core services throughout COVID. We are evolving according to our patient needs, technologies, funding priorities, and disease prevalence in our populations. —Bill Swanstrom, Executive Director

We serve clients facing multiple high-risk health symptoms who are economically challenged and who have little to no health insurance

### Telehealth Screening for COVID-19 Symptoms

- Standard symptom screening
- Free masks and PPE
- Take-home test kits
- Multi-family member involvement in the process
- Barriers to health screening

### Patient Assistance

- Medical follow-up for diabetes, hypertension, postsurgical procedures, emergency department visits, etc.
- Medication review and education
- Health education: nutrition, healthy pregnancy, infant and child development, smoking cessation, and weight management
- Chronic disease management
- Case management: the coordination of medical and community resources, services, and referrals

### Service Through Relationships, Respect, Dignity & Community



#### Relationships

First and foremost, our nurses and social workers forge a bond of trust with each of our clients, patients, and often with entire families.



#### Respect

Respect for our clients and their challenges is the basis of our work. We listen to our clients and always try to go above and beyond to help solve their problems.



#### Dignity

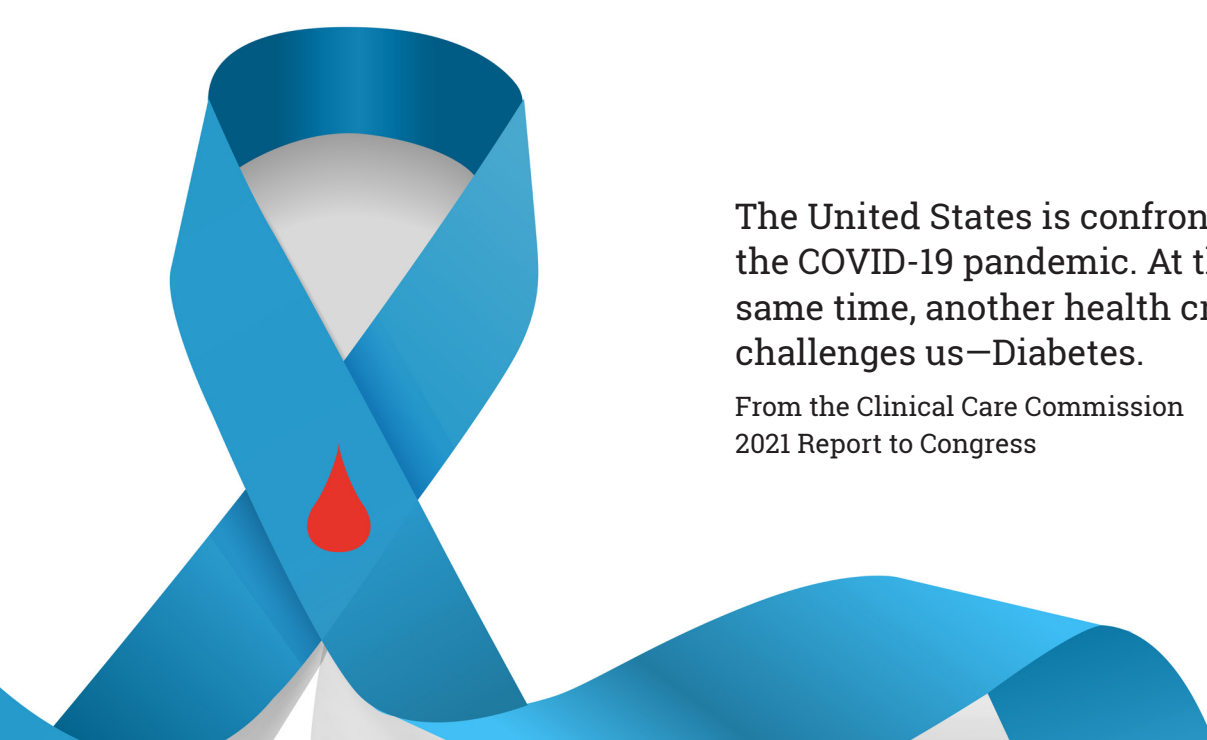
The entire RVHS team works to assure all individuals and families in our community will have access to health promotion, disease prevention activities, curative and preventative health, as well as social services, without regard to ability to pay.



#### Community

We are dedicated to promoting community wellness through serving vulnerable individuals and ensuring access to health resources in our community.





The United States is confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, another health crisis challenges us—Diabetes.

From the Clinical Care Commission  
2021 Report to Congress

Spotlight on

# DIABETES & PRE-DIABETES

Diabetes is a chronic disease that results in too much sugar (or glucose) in the blood. In the U.S., diabetes is a leading cause of blindness in adults, kidney failure, and lower-limb amputations, and is a significant contributor to death, including death from COVID-19. In addition, individuals with poorly controlled diabetes have at least a two-fold greater risk of death from COVID-19. Both diabetes and its complications are more common and more severe in low-income Americans and Americans of color.

According to a recent American Diabetes Association analysis of diabetes health data, 52.5% of Hispanic women and 45.4% of Hispanic men will have Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes in their lifetimes. In contrast, only 31.2% of non-Hispanic women and 26.7% of non-Hispanic men will experience diabetes, according to a WebMD report.

Approximately forty percent of RVHS patients are diabetic or pre-diabetic and are at more risk for developing COVID. Our focus throughout the pandemic is on high-risk clients in Scott and Carver counties. High-risk groups for the COVID-19 infection include persons over 50 with heart or lung disease,

## HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Pregnant women  
Advanced age  
Overweight  
Hispanics  
Asians  
Native Americans  
African Americans  
Veterans

diabetes, or other underlying conditions. Many of our clients are vulnerable, economically disadvantaged, may not speak English, and have little or no healthcare access.

RVHS obtained a grant from Boston Scientific Corporation

Foundation. The grant helps us screen diabetes patients and develop case planning to improve A1C, including referrals to weight loss and dietary education providers. (A normal A1C level is below 5.7%, a level of 5.7% to 6.4% indicates prediabetes, and a level of 6.5% or more indicates diabetes.) We hope to gain some foothold into combatting diabetes, especially since research suggests that diabetes and COVID place patients at complimentary risk of both diagnoses.

# BARRIERS TO HEALTH

Most healthcare doesn't only happen in the doctor's office. Access to adequate housing, food, transportation, and income also play a huge factor in healthcare. We have agreed to participate with Allina Health as a referral vendor at the Clinic level.

An Allina intake professional will screen a patient covering barriers to health, including housing, food, insurance, transportation, etc., recognizing that other needs remain once the medical needs are resolved. RVHS will receive a referral to assist the patient in obtaining assistance on one or more of their identified needs.



## BARRIERS TO HEALTH QUESTIONS

- ✓ What is your housing situation today?
- ✓ Do you worry your food will run out before you are able to buy more?
- ✓ Does lack of transportation keep you from work, meetings or getting things that you need?
- ✓ Does lack of transportation keep you from medical appointments?
- ✓ Do you have trouble paying for heat, electricity, water, or phone?
- ✓ Do you have trouble paying for medications?

**River Valley Health Services operates on referrals. Our patients are referred by other agencies and by word of mouth from former patients.**

## MEDICAL BILL ASSISTANCE

One of our core functions is to provide up to \$100 assistance annually for co-pay on medical bills or prescriptions. Due to economic issues, many of our clients are financially challenged and cannot afford basic medicine.



## BASIC NEEDS

It is not just the virus—many of our clients are totally wiped out and require basic needs for survival: food, interim shelter, transportation and medications. They also require assistance in applying for help, and need help finding resources.

## EYE CARE NEEDS

Eye care, examination, testing eye wear and surgery needs all grew in 2021. Our historical benefactors are no longer aiding.



# CLIENT CASE STUDIES

## THE STORIES AND STRUGGLES OUR CLIENTS FACE EACH DAY CAN BE HEARTWARMING AND HEARTBREAKING.

An 85-year-old Carver County Vet reached out to the VA for a COVID-19 vaccination. The VA said he did not qualify because he was over income and did not use the VA for his health care; he thought that was strange but did not question them. So he tried setting up a vaccination appointment for himself with no luck. He responded to an email Bill sent out, and RVHS got him set up for his vaccinations! He could not have been happier. After each shot, he has called the nurse to thank RVHS for their work.

After visiting West Side La Clinica for an appointment about a bladder mesh problem, a long-time client of RVHS (M) was given medication for treatment. However, she was not feeling mentally good—she was feeling sad and very stressed, so we scheduled a visit at the RVHS Clinic. Dr. Willey reviewed the medication she received from the other doctor and agreed with the treatment. M was able to talk to Dr. Willey about how she was feeling and was prescribed medication for depression which was paid for by RVHS. She likes that she can see a doctor not too far from her home, which has been a factor in getting medical attention. Her 14-year-old son also talked to Dr. Willey and was able to get some over-the-counter medication from RVHS for free.

A 48-year-old Hispanic gentleman with no insurance was trying to work through severe back pain but was having trouble sitting or lying as the pain was overwhelming. He had been in a car accident about ten years ago. The pain shot down his left leg and caused numbness and tingling in his leg and foot. He saw Dr. Willey at

the RVHS Clinic, who did a thorough assessment and prescribed medication to try to help ease the pain. In addition to weekly visits to assess the progress and medication refills, Dr. Willey also provided a work restriction note that would hopefully give him time to heal. Dr. Willey also noticed a consistent increase in blood pressure readings. RVHS gave the man a blood pressure machine to take and record his readings, and Dr. Willey prescribed him blood pressure medication. Dr. Willey and the RVHS nurse are currently researching how to get an MRI and epidural steroids at a low cost. He is grateful for our help and services and is still awaiting news of where we could schedule him for a low-cost MRI.

A 64-year-old Cambodian woman who is a current client of RVHS had cataract surgery last fall. An RVHS nurse helped set up the surgery and filled out her paperwork. Her patient advocate told RVHS staff about several complications after her eye procedures. She had been given drops with no relief and felt her vision was worsening. RVHS set up additional appointments, and she went in for a second opinion, including a neuro-ophthalmologist. As a result, she had surgery to remove a 2cm × 3cm tumor behind her eye. The procedure took 5 hours, and she was in the hospital for four days. RVHS ordered groceries for her from HyVee for her recuperation time at home. She was so thankful for all the help and support from RVHS. RVHS also helped her apply for medical insurance, so she is grateful to have insurance after the expenses of several tests, surgery, and a stay in the hospital.



An elderly Hispanic gentleman (G) reached out to RVHS because he was having severe stomach pains. Dr. Willey decided G should not go to the ER because his symptoms were improving. G was scheduled to see Dr. Willey in person. During his physical, he was diagnosed with prostatitis and high blood pressure; the patient was unaware he had problems with his blood pressure. Dr. Willey prescribed medication, which was sent to the pharmacy using the GoodRx program. G was given a BP monitor and a notebook to check at home and was told to come back for follow-up on both diagnoses. G was grateful for the free appointments and clinic services with Dr. Willey. He has been better since and keeping his appointments.

Ms. E was referred to RVHS by Scott County after experiencing headaches and dizziness. She needed to see a doctor about her high blood pressure because of her symptoms. She also required refills on her meds, and she did not have insurance. She got an appointment to see Dr. Willey, who prescribed her the needed medications and a BP monitor. She has since been at the clinic to follow up with Dr. Willey to control her high blood pressure. She is so pleased she can now see a doctor in town, and she does not have to pay for consults. She likes the fact she can call RVHS when she needs it.

Ms. M called River Valley because she had severe abdominal pain and thought it was her gallbladder. She wanted advice on where she could go because she did not have medical insurance. We advised her to use the St Francis Emergency Room, which offers more financial assistance opportunities. She went there and ended up staying at the hospital for a week. Doctors discovered she had a huge tumor near the liver the size of a football. Once stabilized, she had surgery to remove the tumor at Abbott Hospital in Minneapolis the following week. Ms. M is doing good right now; we were able to connect her with Portico, and she is applying for Emergency Medical Assistance. She is very grateful for our advice and standing with her through this process.

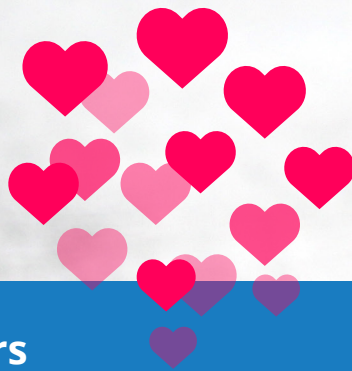
A 62-year-old Hispanic woman (H) moved to Minnesota to live with a friend. The friend no longer wanted her to stay with her when she got here. She was homeless for seven months living in her car in a wheelchair. Susie at the CAP agency reached out to RVHS because H was diabetic and on insulin and could not afford her supplies. An RVHS nurse met H at a Target parking lot with the diabetic supplies. H was sitting in her wheelchair by her car. She was constantly itching her arms and legs, which were covered with scabbed-over mosquito bites—she had been sleeping in her car with the windows rolled down because it was too hot inside the car to sleep. H sleeps in her car in Eden Prairie near the Walmart. RVHS called around to find a hotel in Eden Prairie, but none were available. She does not qualify for services here in MN as she has an open case in California. H wants to get her car repaired before heading back to California, where she is homeless but has more people to help her.

A 57-year-old Hispanic man (J), a Scott County resident with health insurance, was hospitalized for COVID at Methodist Hospital. He had a \$2000 bill that his insurance did not cover. RVHS helped him apply for a financial assistance program with Park Nicollet and made him follow-up appointments with specialists as he was still having issues with his lungs. Park Nicollet Assistance Program covered all but \$200 of the bill. RVHS assisted him by making the additional \$200 payment and paid \$25 for some medication he needed from the pharmacy.

A 54-year-old African American woman and five-year client of RVHS (B), who we helped connect with housing, food support, and health insurance, was having some swelling in her arms, hands, feet, ankles and legs. She reached out to an RVHS nurse who advised her to go to the ER after a video chat. B went to the ER, where she waited outside in a tent for 4 hours before going into the building. The ER found several health issues and admitted her for three days. After her release and unable to pay for her ten prescriptions, RVHS paid for and delivered the much-needed medications along with masks, hand sanitizer, and gloves.

# DEDICATION

River Valley Health Services is dedicated to promoting community wellness by serving vulnerable individuals and ensuring access to health resources. We are committed to assisting the uninsured and underinsured. No one will leave without at least one need addressed and/or solved.



## 2021–2022 Donors

Barbara Jean Weckman Brekke  
Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Boston Scientific Foundation  
Carver County  
Chanhassen Rotary  
Chaska American Legion  
Chaska Rotary Foundation  
Community Giving Foundation  
Faith Lutheran Church Waconia  
HealthPartners  
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Medica Foundation  
Minnesota Department of Health  
Scott County  
Shakopee Rotary  
Shepherd of the Lake  
SHIP  
St. Francis Regional Medical Center  
St. Joachim and Anne Catholic Parish  
St. John The Baptist Church  
State of Minnesota Hunger Grant  
U CARE  
VFW Chaska  
Westwood Church

## Community Partnerships

Allina Hospitals & Clinics  
American Legion Chaska  
CAP Agency  
Carver County Public Health and Human Services  
Chaska Police Department  
DAV  
Esperanza  
FISH  
HealthPartners  
Love, INC  
National Association of Free and Charitable  
Clinics (NAFC)  
Park Nicollet Health Services  
Portico Healthnet  
Ridgeview Medical Center  
Scott County Public Health/Human Services  
Shakopee Chamber of Commerce  
Shakopee Community Assistance

“All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.”— St. Francis Of Assisi

We are totally dependent on donations for our sustenance and it seems like whenever a need arises, another candle is lit. Thank you!

# RVHS TEAM

## Nursing, Interpreters & Community Outreach Staff

### HEIDI

RN

I have been an RN for 25 years and have a background working in Labor and Delivery, Postpartum, and Level 11 Nursery. I love working at RVHS because I have a heart and compassion for helping our clients.

### MARY

RN

I have been a nurse for over 50 years. I am an advocate for vulnerable children and adults, as well as those who are uninsured and under-insured. I find River Valley Health Services a very rewarding ministry.

### MARITZA

Spanish Interpreter/  
Community Outreach

I've been with Scott, Carver, Dakota CAP Agency and River Valley Health Services for many years. I'm bilingual in both English and Spanish. It is a privilege to support and give back to the community I live in.

### ADRIANA

Spanish Interpreter/  
Community Outreach

I have been a Spanish medical and community interpreter for many years. I love working at RVHS because we help patients find the resources they need when they do not know where to go. I love being able to help people in my community with the language barrier.

### LINDA

RN, BSN, PHN

After 48 years of nursing, I've become more aware and knowledgeable of the many barriers and challenges that individuals and families face in accessing health care services and resources if they are uninsured. It is gratifying to work at RVHS to advocate, listen, and help people obtain the care and resources they may need.

### BILL SWANSTROM

Executive Director

My passion is to use my prior private sector experiences along with my more recent LISW/MPH training on behalf of the clients of River Valley. It's extremely rewarding.

### DR. DAVID WILLEY, MD

Dr. Willey's practice includes the whole family from newborn to grandparents. His current positions: Physician at Catalyst Medical Clinic, PA, Chaska, Medical Consultant at Carver County Human Services, and Medical Director at SMSC Clinics, Prior Lake, MN. His professional affiliations are the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) and the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians (MAFP). His hospital affiliation is with St. Francis Medical Center, Shakopee, MN.







# LOOKING FORWARD TO 2022

Due to  
COVID-19, normal  
operating expenses  
more than doubled.  
We expect this pace  
to continue into  
2022.

## RVHS FUNDING NEEDS CONTINUE TO GROW

### OPERATING CAPITAL

- Personnel & Staffing
- Outreach Personnel
- Marketing & Advertising
- Translation Services

### SUPPLIES

- Office Supplies
- Medical Supplies
- Technology

### CLIENT NEEDS

- Food
- PPE
- Medication
- Transportation
- Medical Visits

## Board of Directors

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**Noreen Kleinfehn Wald,**  
RN, PHN, MA  
(Retired)  
*Board Chair*

**Tara Cliff,** RN, MPH  
Supervisor of Health Services,  
Eastern Carver County Schools  
*Secretary*

**Glenn Johnston,** RN  
(Retired)  
*Treasurer*

**Bill Swanstrom,** MBA, LISW, MPH  
Veteran, Retired Bank President  
*Executive Director*

**Lynn Price,** MS, LPCC  
Program Manager, Health,  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Minnesota

**Dr. Ann McGinn,** MD, MPH

**Erica Denzer,** RN  
Patient Care Manager,  
St. Francis Regional Medical  
Center

**Dr. Richard Scott,** EdD  
CHS Administrator/  
Public Health Director,  
Carver County

**Dr. Michael Wilcox,** MD  
Medical Director, Scott County

**Jamie Stolee,** BSN, CEN, MBA  
Patient Care Manager, ED,  
Urgent Care, St. Francis Regional  
Medical Center/Allina Health

**Krystina Werner**  
Housing Specialist,  
Community Action Program

**CONSIDER SERVING ON  
OUR BOARD. HELP US MAKE  
COMPASSIONATE, TIMELY  
AND ACCESSIBLE HEALTH  
SERVICES FOR ALL.**