



# CCHCC's Community Health Workers

August 31, 2015

*"If it weren't for the wonderful staff at CCHCC, I don't know if I'd be alive today – and that is no exaggeration. They have helped me turn my health around when I thought there was no hope. I was uninsured and they helped me get the health care I needed – surgery, therapy for my back, a brain aneurysm diagnosed, prescriptions, and dental care. I was literally falling apart and I was suffering every day, and they helped me get the health care I needed to put me back together again. And now, with the Affordable Care Act, they have helped me get health insurance for the first time in my adult life, which gives me great peace of mind!*

*The staff at CCHCC are unsung heroes, performing miracles and quietly saving lives. They are the safety net for so many of us in this community. I refer everyone I know who has a health care problem to CCHCC. And I ask everyone I know to please make a contribution to support CCHCC!"*

*– Mr. B, Urbana, IL*

Dear Friends,

Many of the clients who come to us at Champaign County Health Care Consumers (CCHCC) are often in desperate need of health care or prescriptions they cannot afford, including many seniors. Clients come to us scared, afraid that what they hope for and need is not possible. Frequently they are very sick and suffering, and they are very stressed.

***The services our Community Health Workers provide change our clients' lives in concrete and profound ways.***

CCHCC's Community Health Workers:

- Serve over 500 clients per month, helping them get access to health care, and helping them qualify for health insurance and other benefits and services;
- Enrolled over 1,000 individuals in health insurance made available through the Affordable Care Act in the last two years;
- Helped local patients qualify for over \$2.4 million in financial assistance discounts at Carle in the last two years;
- Help seniors with their Medicare-related expenses every single day;
- Created a small Rx Fund that has helped over 60 clients in the past year get desperately-needed prescriptions; and
- Work in the Champaign County Jails and at Frances Nelson Health Center as a result of innovative collaborations designed to get more people the help they need.

CCHCC does not provide health care, but we provide the services and support needed so that individuals and families can overcome the barriers they face in getting health care. These services are provided on a one-to-one basis, at no cost to the client, and are frequently very time-intensive.

***Please read on to learn more about what our Community Health Workers do (some of it will surprise you!) and the work that your financial contribution helps make possible.***

## **Who are CCHCC's Community Health Workers?**

CCHCC's Community Health Workers are our client services staff, whom we usually refer to as "advocates" or "enrollment counselors." We are now referring to our staff as Community Health Workers (CHWs) because there is a growing national and statewide movement to recognize the importance of this category of front line public health workers and the (previously unrecognized) role they fill within the health care system.

CCHCC has four Community Health Workers: Adani Sanchez, Chris Garcia, Jen Tayabji, and Guadalupe Gomez Huizar. Three out of our four CHWs are fully bi-lingual in English and Spanish! And one of our CHWs, Jen Tayabji, specializes in issues affecting seniors, and in Medicare programs.

## **The work of our CHWs is recognized by the State of Illinois!**

*The work of our CHWs is so highly regarded that in November 2014, then-Governor Pat Quinn appointed Chris Garcia, one of our CHWs, to serve on a Statewide Community Health Worker Advisory Board, to help guide the State's development of CHW credentialing. Eventually, it might even be possible that health insurance will pay for CHW services!*

## **What our Community Health Workers do – how they help.**

Our CHWs provide a range of individualized services from enrollment assistance, benefits counseling, advocacy, and case management. Our CHWs are trained, experienced, knowledgeable, and compassionate, and because they know our local health and social services systems, are able to help individuals and families navigate these complex systems and qualify for, and maintain important benefits. Our CHWs help clients apply for Medicaid, health insurance through the Marketplace, Medicare (including Medicare Extra Help, Medicare Savings Programs, Medicare Part D), food stamps, free and affordable dental care, free and affordable vision care and glasses, and prescriptions. CHWs also help clients apply for free government phones as well as financial assistance for medical debt. Our CHWs also frequently help clients deal with complex health insurance issues, including denials of claims.

## **Where we provide our Community Health Worker services – this might surprise you!**

CCHCC's Community Health Workers not only staff our office in downtown Champaign, but are also "embedded" with other agencies and organizations in order to more effectively reach our community members in need of CHW services. For example:

- CCHCC's CHW, Guadalupe ("Lupe") Gomez Huizar is embedded on a full-time basis at Promise Healthcare's Frances Nelson Health Center, where she provides health insurance enrollment services to English and Spanish speaking patients. In part, due to Lupe's work at Frances Nelson, the clinic has succeeded in reducing its patients' uninsurance rate from about 50% to below 20%.
- CCHCC's CHW, Adani Sanchez also works one day a week at Frances Nelson Health Center to supplement the services that Lupe provides.
- CCHCC's CHW, Chris Garcia, is embedded in the two Champaign County Jails for three days each week to provide health insurance enrollment services to individuals who are incarcerated but who will be released in a short period of time. Many of these individuals follow-up with Chris at the CCHCC office after they leave the jail, and Chris helps them with the additional services they need.

CCHCC's ability to "embed" CHW staff at these locations is a result of innovative collaborations with organizations and agencies including Promise Healthcare (Frances Nelson Health Center), Community Elements, Champaign County Sheriff's Office, Champaign County Mental Health Board, and others. These

organizations recognize and value the expertise and effectiveness of our CHWs.

All our CHWs – Jen, Adani, Chris, and Lupe – also provide services at a number of soup kitchens, food pantries, health fairs, and other events. In addition, our CHWs provide professional support to case managers and social workers at various other agencies and organizations in our community.

### **CCHCC's Rx Fund – CHWs responding to a big problem with a smart solution!**

A few years ago, CCHCC's Community Health Workers identified a big problem facing many of our clients – they were unable to afford their prescriptions. And even though there are some churches and organizations that sometimes help cover the costs of prescriptions for low-income patients, these organizations frequently run out of funds or will not cover certain kinds of prescriptions (like psychiatric medications), or will only help a client once per year. Endless hours were being spent by our CHWs and their clients making calls and visiting agencies in order to try to get the costs of prescriptions covered – usually unsuccessfully.

Many of the medications that our clients need but are unable to afford are prescriptions for chronic health conditions such as blood pressure or diabetic medicines, and psychiatric medicines. Access to prescriptions is absolutely essential. For example, we have had more than one client who upon getting discharged from the hospital after having a stroke was unable to afford their blood pressure medicine – an absolute must in order to help prevent future strokes!

So, our CHWs sought funds from local churches and individuals to create our Rx Fund, which CCHCC manages. The Rx Fund has been hugely successful and highly effective! Even after health insurance expanded under the Affordable Care Act and many of our clients qualified for Medicaid, they still had difficulties affording the small co-pays required for prescription medications – the \$3 or \$4 co-pays were simply out of reach, especially if they had more than one prescription to fill.

Now, with the Rx Fund, our CHWs are able to help our clients afford the prescriptions they need in order to get well or to maintain their health.

### **Our CHWs are here to help, but we can't do it without your support!**

CCHCC's Community Health Workers do not perform "miracles" – it just feels that way to our clients when they get the help they did not believe was possible. Your financial support helps make the vital services of our Community Health Workers possible.

I hope you will consider making a contribution to CCHCC to support the services provided by our Community Health Workers – services that change lives for the better.

And of course, if you – or anyone you know – needs help, please call us at (217) 352-6533 or come to our office on Main Street in downtown Champaign. We can help!

### **Thank you for your support!**

Sincerely,



Claudia Lennhoff, Executive Director

*P.S. Your contribution  
is tax-deductible  
Thank you for your  
support!*



## Upcoming Events & Important Dates

### Community Meeting to Protect the Mahomet

Saturday, September 19, 2015

10:30 a.m. at the Champaign Public Library

200 W. Green St., Champaign

### Medicare Open Enrollment Community Meeting

Wednesday, October 14, 2015

10:30 a.m. at the Champaign Public Library

200 W. Green St., Champaign

## 2016 Insurance Open Enrollment Periods



#### Marketplace Website

healthcare.gov

#### National 24/7 Call Center

1 (800) 318-2596

TTY: 1 (855) 889-4325

#### Important Dates

Open Enrollment Period

Nov. 1, 2015 - Jan. 31, 2016

Coverage Begins As Early As

January 1, 2016

**\*\*If you qualify for Medicaid,  
enrollment is year-round!\*\***

### Medicare.gov

The Official U.S. Government Site for Medicare

#### Medicare Website

medicare.gov

#### Medicare Phone Number

1 (800) 633-2447

#### Local SHIP Office

Presence Center for Healthy Living

(217) 337-2022

#### Important Dates

Open Enrollment Period

October 15 - December 7, 2015

For 2016 Advantage and Rx plans starting

January 1, 2016

Champaign County Health Care Consumers

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