

VOLUNTEER VIEWS

VOLUME 1

"A Newsletter written for Volunteers by Volunteers"

APRIL, 1991

The Champaign County Health Care Consumers

cordially invites you to attend a

VOLUNTEER OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, April 25, 1991
4:00-6:00 p.m.

Food and refreshments will be served.

The Lincoln Building
44 East Main, Room 208
Downtown Champaign

Please join us as we recognize our volunteers' efforts to make health care better for all!

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK 1991

CONSUMER HEALTH HOTLINE

■ In 1980, the Champaign County Health Care Consumers' (CCHCC) CONSUMER HEALTH HOTLINE was created in response to numerous phone calls seeking information about various health care issues. Unlike other hotlines, the calls received are not crisis in nature but require dissemination of information, response to specified needs and complaints, and grievance resolutions.

The two main goals of the CONSUMER HEALTH HOTLINE are to assist individuals in resolving concerns/complaints and to provide continuous assessment of local health problem areas and needs. The calls received are from Champaign County residents that previously had nowhere to go with their questions and concerns. The Hotline provides assistance to consumers who usually lack the skills to help themselves.

During the ten year existence of the CONSUMER HEALTH HOTLINE and even before its establishment, it has become clear that health care consumers are often unaware of their rights as patients, lack access to crucial information about the health care

system, and lack the resources and self-confidence to resolve concerns and grievances. Health care consumers are often intimidated and confused by a system they depend on, but know little about.

Currently, calls are received regarding grievances, patient's rights, billing problems, access to medical and dental care, Medicaid and Medicare, and insurance. Initially, phone calls are handled by the Hotline Coordinator who in turn channels those calls to volunteer staff who work directly with the consumer by providing the assistance and information to the consumer to resolve the specific problem or complaint. Though volunteers can often work at home, follow-up is necessary including accurate case reporting, possible research on issues pertaining to calls, reading and maintaining of current information to be dispensed to callers, and monthly meetings with the Hotline Coordinator.

CCHCC's CONSUMER HEALTH HOTLINE provides a unique service to the Champaign County

continued on page 3

INSIDE

Volunteer Insights	page 2
Volunteer Opportunities	page 3
Upcoming Events	page 4

Dear Volunteers:

I would like to introduce you to the first edition of "Volunteer Views", a newsletter written specifically for volunteers! The purpose of the newsletter is to keep you updated and informed about volunteer events and opportunities. If you would like to become involved in any aspect of organizing the newsletter, please let us know!

Over the past ten months, the volunteer program has grown considerably, which is due in large part to your efforts. Some of your accomplishments include:

- Over 60 volunteers participated in our Annual Phon-A-Thon
- Over 50 volunteers helped with the Annual Conference and Awards Dinner
- 15 student volunteers painted our offices
- Volunteers help with filing, data entry, and news clippings
- Over 30 volunteers assist with bulk mailings on an on-going basis

In honor of National Volunteer Week, the staff and myself would like to express a sincere thanks for your dedication in helping to address health care issues in Champaign County.

Lynn Wolff
CCHCC Volunteer Coordinator

Thoughts from a hotline volunteer . . .

by Andrea DeVries

■ For the past few months, I have been working as a hotline volunteer for the Champaign County Health Care Consumers. I have found my job to be both rewarding and frustrating, challenging and fulfilling. When we work with the clients, I often feel that we are most useful as someone who will locate the right phone numbers, the proper address, the key person to contact. I have found advocacy essentially to be a task of working around the "red tape" of our health care system. The callers themselves seem often to be looking, more than anything else, for someone who will take the time to listen to their side of the story, someone who is willing to empathize with the difficulties that the client is experiencing. Most of the callers feel as if they have been running into brick walls and dead ends.

The people that I have worked with have experienced financial problems such as a families' inability to pay for high hospitalization costs and access problems such as a woman's desire to see her medical records. Since the caller is usually experiencing physical or emotional distress, the additional problems become all the more serious. Michele Werda, Hotline Coordinator, and I have both found that a caller usually has more than one complaint. We start the case by trying to sort out the needs and

goals of the client. While each step forward makes me feel immensely happy, I often wish we could do more, and that I could find more ways to help. It is very clear that the less money a person has, the more difficult it is to work through the health care system. The inequalities in service for Medicaid and uninsured patients have become painfully obvious to me these past few months. As a volunteer, I most wish that I could spend more time with the people I work with, and that we were able to accomplish more. I would encourage anyone who has patience and an ability to listen to people to volunteer. It has given me an insight into our health care system that I could never have learned in my classes as a university student.

"Caring must strengthen into commitment and commitment into action if we are to preserve and nurture one of the greatest forces for rebirth and renewal this nation has . . . Volunteerism."

- Marlene Wilson

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

CHILD CARE:

Responsible individuals needed to care for children during monthly board meetings. Meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month and last for about two hours.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

Improve the professionalism of CCHCC's quarterly newsletter. Experienced photographer needed to take pictures at special events. Camera required.

CARPENTRY:

Our current shelves are unstable and overstuffed! Individual needed to build wooden shelves for office use. Materials would be provided.

CLEANING:

Help maintain office appearance by doing light cleaning work. Needed once a week for 2 hours. Flexible schedule.

For more opportunities or information about volunteering, please contact Lynn Wolff at 352-6533.

"What you see among many people today is what I call 'sophisticated resignation'. We know so much about the problems facing society, and we know that we can't do anything about them on a one-to-one basis. We can't solve homelessness by giving a dollar or a quarter to someone on the street. But if we get involved with a volunteer program, we find that we can have a real impact. When we see how our efforts are effecting change, we become empowered ourselves."

- The Reverend F. Forrester Church

HOTLINE

continued from page 1

area since it is the only hotline service of its kind locally. Specifically, the hotline's importance is based on its role of "helping consumers to help themselves" by providing consumers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively and confidently deal with the health care system. The Champaign County Health Care Consumers hold hotline training sessions three times a year. These sessions cover topics such as an introduction to CCHCC, the history of the hotline, the volunteer's role in the hotline, and how to be an effective advocate. In the past, CCHCC has conducted successful training sessions but as always, volunteers are needed as the Hotline receives more and more calls from consumers.

*If you are interested in becoming a hotline volunteer, the next training session will be scheduled in May. For more information about how you can become involved with the **CONSUMER HEALTH HOTLINE**, please contact Michele at 352-6533.*



Bertha Schmidt, Nettie Cook, Johanna Dodson, and Louise Clark work together on a bulk mailing project.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- Week of April 22* **NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**
- Tuesday, April 23* **HEALTH CARE LOBBY DAY**
All day trip to Springfield to lobby on various health care issues. Free transportation available.
- Wednesday, April 24* **PARKLAND COLLEGE HEALTH FAIR**
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Thursday, April 25* **CCHCC VOLUNTEER OPEN HOUSE**
Come join us from 4 to 6 p.m. and meet the staff. There will be food and refreshments so come along and bring a friend!
- Thursday, May 2* **HMO TASK FORCE MEETING**
Monthly meeting at CCHCC office, 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, May 3* **MAYFEST**
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Marketplace Mall. Senior Citizen fair with all kinds of information and events planned.
- Thursday, May 16* **SENIOR CITIZEN TASK FORCE MEETING**
Monthly meeting at the Stevik Center, 2:30 p.m.
- Monday, May 20* **HOTLINE VOLUNTEER MEETING**
Monthly meeting at CCHCC office, 7:00 p.m.
- Thursday, June 6* **HMO TASK FORCE MEETING**
7:30 p.m. at CCHCC office

According to the most recent Gallup survey commissioned by Independent Sector:

- *Volunteerism is at the highest rate ever! Ninety-eight million people now volunteer.*
- *Volunteers give an average of four hours a week.*
- *Volunteers give more money to charity than nonvolunteers.*
- *The majority of volunteers are working people.*



Champaign County Health Care Consumers
44 Main Street, Suite 208
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 751
Champaign, Illinois