

getting better faster

st. joseph's neighborhood center expands health access navigation system

By Lynette Loomis

With Rochester unemployment rates nearing 11 percent, the number of people without health insurance has grown. So where do you go for help when you don't know where to start? St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center (SJNC), sponsored by the Sisters of St Joseph, charges only minimal visit fees and has been besieged with calls for health and mental health services. To improve their response to the demand for services, the Center was awarded a three-year grant of \$487,033 by Greater Rochester Health Foundation (GRHF) for a Health Access and Navigation System (HANS).

Approximately 50% to 60% of the Center's patients are employed, but most do not have health benefits or cannot afford their insurance co-pays. "We studied the needs of our prospective patients and found that many people find navigating the health system or applying for benefits daunting. As a result, they let their health conditions worsen or use the hospital emergency room for services that could have been avoided by regular medical care," says Christine Wagner, SSJ, executive director of SJNC.

"Lack of health coverage is not an urban or suburban issue. In the first half of 2012, we received inquiries from 1144 new callers from a very diverse group of people from all over the county. While some families were referred to other community-based health centers, we provide direct care to 2,500 people annually.

Given this volume, we determined that a triage system involving other community partners would best serve our growing patient base," says Wagner. Virtually all people want one-stop medical care. And for people who cannot afford time away from work to see multiple providers for primary care, lab, pharmacy, physical therapy, chiropractic, dental, or mental health, or who have limited transportation, being able to secure help from SJNC is the perfect solution.


"We are a small organization whose providers talk directly to each other every day. That allows us to take a bio/psycho/social/spiritual approach to care, which results in

our premise that here people 'get better faster,' states Wagner. David Kyle, an actor and artist, came to the Center after being referred by a fellow performer who was happy with the service she had received there.

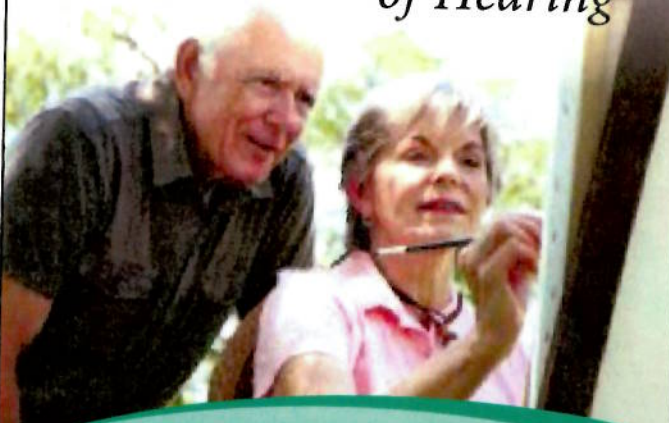


"When I talked with the Health Access staff it was a hundred times easier than I expected it to be," says Kyle. "For the first time in twelve years, I now have health insurance. We found that I qualified for a plan with Healthy New York. It was such a friendly, easy visit and within an hour, I was all set. What a wonderful service the Center provides to the community."

"The HANS was piloted for six months and worked through the logistics before applying for funding for full implementation," says Dennis Richardson, vice chair of the GRHF board. John Urban, president and CEO of GRHF adds, "The system has a three-tiered process that includes intake, health management, and triage/discharge. It is a very cost-effective, comprehensive way of finding the best possible community resource to meet a person's needs and allows the Center to streamline the search for the right care at the right place, reduces emergency room use, and saves time lost from work for patients."



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