



## **Annual Report 2002**



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June, 2003

Dear Friends of the Mercy Health Clinic,

Casey Stengel, the infamous Manager of the New York Yankees, once said, "There are three kinds of people: Those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who say, 'what happened?'" The second annual report of the Mercy Health Clinic will help to answer your questions about "what happened" at the Clinic this last year and know about the hundreds of people who made it possible.

MHC has grown from a grass-root effort to meet the healthcare needs of underserved members of Montgomery County, to a vital and essential contributor of community medical services. It has been accomplished with the help of a small army of volunteers and organizations who donated hundreds of thousands of dollars in valued services and resources each year. As you will see, these efforts were recognized last year with several awards in honor of our volunteer Medical Director, Executive Director, and through our strong partnership with Montgomery County Health and Human Services.

The need for medical care for uninsured, working people of low income will only continue to grow, indicated by our 250% increase in patient visits from our initially projected goals. The ability to meet this mounting crisis will only happen through a coordinated effort of a concerned community committed to solve the problem. For all who are a part of MHC and have helped us accomplish so much this past year, "Thank You"! For those who are "watching things happen", please consider joining our volunteer effort of time, talent, or treasure to provide healthcare services for the neediest members of our community.

Sincerely,

Sharon N. Covington  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
Mercy Health Clinic



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2002**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Mercy Health Clinic is to provide medical and pharmaceutical care to the uninsured low-income residents of Montgomery County. Through a dedicated, volunteer professional staff, the Mercy Health Clinic offers quality primary and preventive health care to those who cannot access these services because of financial hardship.

### **Who we are . . .**

Mercy Health Clinic is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization staffed and run almost entirely by volunteers. We have over 150 volunteer clinical and administrative staff, including 40 doctors who come on site and 25 more who see patients in their offices, as well as our Executive Director. The volunteer staff is supported by a Clinic Administrator and a full-time and two part-time nurses as well as a part time office assistant.

The Clinic works within the Montgomery County Primary Care Coalition (PCC) to ensure that our work complements and extends the work of the other health services organizations in the county. We leverage the generosity of health care professionals and health service organizations, as well as the services and facilities of Montgomery County, to care for the most underserved group in our society – the working poor, who do not qualify for Medicaid and who cannot afford health insurance.

Thanks to the untiring efforts of our volunteer staff of doctors, nurses, registrars, interpreters, and office support, we are making a vital and often life-saving difference in the lives of many who visit us.

### **A snapshot . . .**

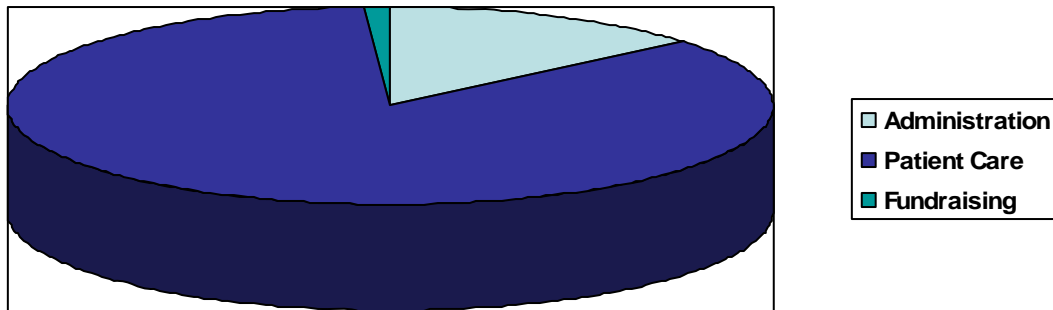
Mercy Clinic opened its doors in October 2000 with a volunteer Board of Directors, a volunteer Executive Director, and commitments from various health care professionals and organizations. We have achieved success far beyond our most ambitious expectations. Doctors, nurses, interpreters, registrars, and office staff have volunteered their time and talent. Shady Grove Hospital has provided free blood tests, at a value of over \$100,000 annually, and several local radiology clinics have provided free imaging services. Local pharmaceutical providers have donated free or low cost access to valuable and expensive drugs, drugs that would otherwise be outside the financial reach of most of our patients. Other benefactors have provided funding for Clinic operations, language and cultural sensitivity training, and specialty clinic materials. Montgomery

County has provided critically necessary support, including facilities and underwriting for our nurses and pharmacy staff.

The Clinic is also indebted to our patients, who, though of limited means, have made every effort to offer their clinic contributions as their way to keep the Clinic operating and expanding its services. Services have grown dramatically, from simple primary care two days a week to a much expanded pharmacy program and multiple specialty clinics. The chart below summarizes our year to year gains in some key areas.

Year	Days Open	Patient Visits	Volunteer Hours	Free Diagnostic Tests	Specialty Clinics
2001	107	2931	7800	\$212,000	2
2002	144	3549	8200	\$225,000	8

As with any health services organization, our record keeping is essential for the welfare of our patients and often mandated by law. However, we have been able to keep administrative overhead to 14% of our all-in cash and donated costs. 85% went directly to patient care and 1% went to fundraising. In addition, since Montgomery County donates facilities space for our use, we have no facilities expenses. The result is that, for every dollar spent by the clinic, we provide \$4.95 in patient care. This is in addition to the significant amount of prescription medications we provide to our patients free of charge.



### Who we serve . . .

The Montgomery County Commission on Health reported that in 2000 there were as many as 80,000 to 100,000 uninsured people living in Montgomery County. Many are low paid workers or seasonal workers whose jobs do not provide health benefits. These residents often avoid seeking necessary health care or seek assistance only at the emergency rooms of local hospitals where they incur expenses that they are unable to pay. According to community health care providers, social workers and county agencies, the need for health care services for the working poor is most critical in the Upper

Montgomery County area, where Mercy Clinic is located. The Montgomery County Commission on Health reported that mortality rates were generally highest in the upcounty region, as are cancer trends. "The upcounty has the farthest to go to meet U.S. goals," the study stated.

To provide the greatest possible benefit from our resources, Mercy Health Clinic focuses on health care for adults. The state and county cover health care for all children living in Montgomery County. What federal or state programs don't provide Montgomery County supplements. However, adults have fewer low cost health care options than children, and the health of the adult is critical to the economic self-sufficiency of the family.

Our patients are struggling to pay rent, buy food, and get transportation to work. Health care is a luxury, and unless the medical care is for their child, they do without. Many of the adults whom we serve are very sick and wait too long to seek medical care. Often they end up in the emergency room of a hospital. Since many of our patients suffer from chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and asthma, we need to have an effective plan to educate and assist them in other ways to manage their diseases so they can live normal, fulfilling lives.

## **Our goals . . .**

### ***Short term goals:***

- *Educate patients of Mercy Health Clinic to take responsibility for their own health by teaching them to
  - *access medical services on a regular basis*
  - *understand their medical needs and maintenance requirements.**
- *Foster awareness of the Clinic, address community needs, and increase collaboration as well as develop ongoing community health partnerships with local government, hospitals, social services agencies, pharmaceutical companies and the public.*
- *Deliver care that is culturally and linguistically sensitive to the population served.*

### ***Long term goals:***

- *Eliminate financial barriers to quality health care for needy residents.*
- *Make it easy for needy residents to access necessary health care services.*
- *Develop linguistically and culturally sensitive approaches to break down roadblocks to health care for underserved populations.*
- *Provide effective and comprehensive outreach to target populations in upper Montgomery County.*
- *Provide ongoing community health education so that neglected residents better understand their health care needs, focusing on those patients with chronic diseases.*

## **What we do . . .**

### **Clinic Services**

Clinic services include:

- General medical appointments with doctors and nurses
- Care for acute illnesses
- Care of chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma
- Necessary laboratory tests
- Preventive care to include
  - Routine physical examinations
  - Personal and group health care education
- Prescription drugs and medications when available
- Specialty clinics targeting diabetes and obesity
- Prostate screening
- Specialty services one or more days a month. Gynecology specialists come three times a month. Dermatology, orthopedic, urology, neurology and ENT clinics are held monthly.

We also provide referral services to other specialists and diagnostic services, including:

- Medical specialists: podiatrist, allergist, ophthalmologist, dentist, cardiologist, asthma specialist and endocrinologist.
- Women's health care
- X-rays
- Mammograms
- Mental health services.

### **Patient Activities**

Since Mercy Health Clinic opened its doors on October 3, 2000 through December 2002, we have seen 1,820 individual patients and have handled over 6800 patient visits. Since many of the patients do not speak English, our interpreters and dual language clinical staff are invaluable. At the same time, we are working on overcoming a less visible but just as important cultural gap.

The majority of our patients are young to middle aged working people with low level jobs. Unlike other clinics, we see few, if any patients suffering from alcoholism or drug addiction. Many patients, particularly older foreign born, have little education and a limited command of the English language.

Most of the patients are very appreciative of the value of our medical assistance and follow treatment plans carefully. However, a sizeable minority, perhaps 20-25%, are

more difficult to support, frequently due to a lack of understanding of their responsibility. They may take medication incorrectly, run out of medication, fail to pick up medication waiting for them at the Clinic, fail to follow important dietary instructions, or miss appointments either at the Clinic or at diagnostic facilities or with specialists.

In order to minimize these problems our nurses prepare a sheet of Discharge Instructions for each patient, including medications, appointments, diet, and other instructions. The nurses then carefully go over each item with each patient. This is time consuming but very valuable, as it serves as a reminder for the patient at home and reduces errors. Furthermore, since we have a copy of the instructions we can verify them.

### **Hours of Operation**

The clinic has expanded its hours. We continue to be open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 to 8 PM for primary care. However, we now hold specialty clinics on Wednesdays. Gynecology specialists come three times a month. Dermatology, orthopedic, urology, neurology and ENT clinics are held monthly. We plan to expand the hours of the clinic and to offer an additional day of operation in the near future.

Meanwhile, the nurses continue to communicate with the patients on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to give the results of lab reports, schedule appointments, and answer a wide variety of questions.

### **Pharmacy Program**

When we opened, our drug needs were met largely by donations of samples from drug representatives and doctors' offices. We are now able to provide most of our needy patients with medications, and we are continuing to enroll patients in the Pharmacy Assistance Program through Medbank. The Knights of Malta provide us with some generic medications, and we supplement that with donations from private individuals, organizations and private grants. We received a grant from Maryland Partnership for Health to purchase flu vaccine for 2002. This is significant since only four grants were awarded last year.

Because the drugs come from a variety of sources, the same drug may not be available on each visit. Usually, however, our supply is varied enough that an acceptable substitution is possible. Our goal is to provide affordable medication, because if we cannot provide the medication and the patients cannot afford to buy it, they will do without.

### **Diabetic Clinic and Lifestyle Clinic**

Our Diabetic Clinic is ongoing and serves 30 to 40 patients at each session. Patients attend an eight session series to learn to control their diabetes. After attending three sessions patients are given glucometers and strips to help them control their diabetes.

Through the Primary Care Coalition, we are also taking part in a diabetic program funded by a Trinity Health Grant. This will enable us to provide focused medical care, education, glucometers and test strips to 50 of our diabetic patients. This grant will be renewed for the next year.

We began a pilot Lifestyle Clinic in October, and from that information, we have planned a monthly series to begin in February. This clinic will be divided into half-hour segments that include exercise, nutrition, mental health and physical health.

### **Patient Eligibility**

Our eligibility process was put into effect in January and we were able to cut the waiting time for new patient visits by half. We have five volunteer screeners who speak Spanish and French as well as English. We have developed a screening process very similar to what the County uses for its emergency social services.

### **Diagnostic Support**

Radiology continues to be offered without charge to our clients by the members of our Radiology Coalition. It consists of Drs. Groover, Christie & Merritt, Community Radiology, Clinical Radiology, PMI Open MRI, Shady Grove Radiology, Washington Radiology, and a group of private orthopedic physicians

Shady Grove Adventist Hospital donated free lab tests for all of our patients over the past year. This amounted to a very generous donation of in-kind services of over \$100,000 last year.

Suburban Hospital has donated examining room supplies.

### **Health & Human Services Partnership**

Our partnership with Montgomery County Health & Human Services continues on a firm footing. We now occupy 3 examining rooms, 3 offices, a pharmacy room, 2 waiting rooms, 3 intake rooms, and a conference room.

The public library on the first floor of the building will be moving to a new location within the next 2 to 3 years. Construction of the new library is scheduled to start in 2003. Our architect, Dennis Delizzio helped us work up a plan for future expansion. We submitted a request for 5,000 square feet of space on the first floor of the Upcounty Regional Services Center when it becomes available.

In addition, the County has awarded us a grant of \$82,500 for patient medical care, and \$13,000 for pharmaceutical support.

## **Behind the scenes . . .**

### **Patient Data Base**

Our patient database continues to be maintained and updated by dedicated, hard working computer volunteers. We continue to cooperate with the Primary Care Coalition to connect all of the safety net provider clinics together, so that we can share data, and improve the quality of the health programs that are funded by the County.

The Coalition has connected us to the Internet, and has provided us with two computers to assist us in complying with the County's request for information to substantiate our requests for continued financial support.

We have also been the recipients of a private donation of a new computer, and a Community Services grant from the County to purchase two computers, specialized software and a monitor.

### **Personnel**

We continue to recruit volunteers through word of mouth, newspaper media, church bulletins, and personal appeals both to companies and other organizations. Our volunteer appreciation efforts included a Valentine thank you letter, a Volunteer Appreciation picnic at the Dragon Boat Races in May, a baseball game and dinner at Shirley Povich Field in July, and a holiday party in December with food provided by the famous Chefs of Mercy Health Clinic.

The number of volunteer doctors who see patients at the clinic has increased to over 40. Additional volunteer physicians see patients in their own offices. Through a concerted effort to recruit more volunteers this summer we have added 25 new volunteers. The recruitment of volunteers is one of our top priorities, and we are lucky to have such a good network through the houses of worship in the upcounty area to spread the news. We have been accepted as part of the Montgomery County Public Schools Community Service Programs, which provides an additional source of energetic and computer literate volunteers.

The efforts of our dedicated volunteers are augmented by our two full-time staff positions of Nurse Coordinator and Nurse Assistant, and two part-time Pharmacy Nurses. We also have a part time office assistant.

### **Public Relations**

Our patient brochures are available in both English and Spanish. We have a web site [www.mercyhealthclinic.org](http://www.mercyhealthclinic.org) and published our first newsletter in early 2003. A new informational handout has been printed and paid for by the Primary Care Coalition for our use in soliciting funds.

Mercy Health Clinic was featured in two articles in the Washington Post last year, and in two articles in the Gazette newspapers. We feel we have become a recognized part of the Germantown community, since the Medical Director and the Executive Director were bestowed the honor of Grand Marshal for the Germantown Oktoberfest Parade.

### **Funding**

Our second annual fundraising gala was held on November 4, 2002, at "Twin Oaks"--the residence of the Economic Representative from Taiwan, PRC. Several area chefs donated appetizers and personally served their own signature dish at the event, which made for an exceptional experience.

Our development committee continues to work on researching additional sources of funding. We have also been the recipients of a number of large contributions and grants, thanks to our excellent development and grant writing volunteers, and include: Kaiser Permanente, Bowie State University, Dept. of Multicultural Diversity, Maryland Partners for Health, Montgomery County Community Foundation, Kemper Open, Marriott "Spirit to Serve", Knights of Columbus, Our Lady of Mercy Church, Rotary Club and the Germantown Oktoberfest.

The Clinic started a correspondence with houses of worship in the Germantown-Gaithersburg area before we opened. Letters are sent every 6 months updating our progress and requesting financial support. In addition, we send the churches a bulletin insert to advertise our services, and to attract volunteers and private donors. Several of these churches support us financially each year.

### **Personnel Development**

Our staff training has continued on an individual basis. Each new volunteer is invited to the Clinic for an informal interview and tour of the Clinic. They are then oriented on an individual basis, and put into the schedule. Our principal need is for nurse volunteers.

Bowie State University's Multicultural and Diversity Institute has renewed our grant for a second year so that we can provide Spanish language instruction to our staff, and continue to conduct diversity and cultural sensitivity seminars. We were able to enroll three volunteers in the County's ongoing Spanish classes this fall, and we hope to be able to continue and to increase the number of attendees in 2003. Spanish language classes are being held on Monday evenings in the Language Room of Our Lady of Mercy School. These classes are open to all volunteers and staff members free of charge.

### **Recognition**

We are proud of the recognition we have received from various sources. Dr. James A. Ronan, Chief Medical Officer, was chosen as Potomac Rotary's "Man of the Year."

Executive Director Alvina Long received a "2002 Spirit to Serve" award and a check from Marriott International. In a team effort, Mercy Health Clinic and Montgomery County won a national "Acts of Caring" award given by the National Association of Counties.

## **Our plans for 2003 . . .**

Operational effectiveness: Our short term plans are focused on improving the operation of the Clinic. Our first initiative is to streamline the flow of patients through the Clinic from the Reception to the Registrar to the Nurse Coordinator and that Clinic staff hours are better coordinated with the patients schedules.

Hiring plans: If funding permits, we plan to hire an additional Nurse Coordinator to ease the workload of our current Nurse Coordinators. The position of Nurse Coordinator is critical to our ability to provide high quality health care.

In a parallel initiative, we will further specify our operating procedures.

Facilities: We are working with Montgomery County DHHS and the Primary Care Coalition on options for expanding our facilities space.

Integration with other service organizations: All of the members of the Primary Care Coalition are working on developing an integrated health care system, based on an integrated information management system. At the same time, we will be expanding our partnership with other faith-based or community service organizations in the county, particularly those in the upcounty area.

We look forward to building on our foundations to increase the services we are able to offer, to reach a greater number of the uninsured, and improve the quality of our care. Nothing that we have achieved or will accomplish in the future would be possible without the dedication of our volunteer staff. Their sense of purpose and commitment to the Clinics mission has brought us to where we are today and will carry us forward in the future.



## **Board of Directors**

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Richard B. Perry, MD - Secretary

James A. Ronan Jr., MD - Medical Director

Alvina E. Long - Executive Director

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Stacey W. Goldstein, RN - Nurse Manager

Donna Romer, RN - Pharmacy Nurse