



We're getting through this together!

It's hard to believe that for over a year now, our community has been grappling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. So much of life has been upended in one way or another, and yet one thing has remained true — our community has been incredibly generous to Neighborcare Health.

In this newsletter, we're excited to share stories with you about how Neighborcare has been able to adapt and stay true to our core purpose — providing high-quality, comprehensive health care for everyone in our community. None of this would have been possible without you and our entire family of supporters. Together with our devoted staff, you helped Neighborcare stay nimble and responsive to the constantly evolving challenges our community, patients, and staff have faced.

Thank you for your dedication to the health and well-being of the entire community. Here are just some of the things that we have done together this past year.

Keeping Patients and Staff Safe

- We quickly implemented telehealth to provide safe, socially-distanced care and services for patients.
- We developed new policies and practices for Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in our clinics.
- We have never run out of supplies! Thanks in large part to generous donations by community members of nearly 80,000 masks and face shields.

COVID-19 Testing and Vaccinations

- We provided free COVID-19 testing at our clinics, pop-up community testing events, and through our mobile testing team.
- We performed over 12,000 COVID-19 tests since March 2020, including for many of our neighbors living homeless in shelters, encampments, and permanent supportive housing.
- We began COVID-19 vaccinations for our patients and staff with plans for more vaccination events this spring.

“Patients really wanted to come in and get their cleanings and be seen... Neighborcare [is] making it safe for us to work and for our patients to be [here].”

— Ruth Berhane, dental hygienist



“Thanks for your kindness in facilitating COVID testing for my family. You were all so wonderful.”

— Neighborcare Health patient

Adapting Telehealth to Reach Patients without Phones



As we know, COVID-19 exposed deep inequities in our health care system. But your support has helped Neighborcare Health adapt and evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of the community.

Neighborcare Health's Pike Place Market clinic primarily serves people with low-incomes in downtown Seattle. It's also the base for the Housing Health Outreach Teams and REACH Street Outreach Programs serving people experiencing homelessness or living in supportive housing.

Last year, in response to the pandemic, teams across Neighborcare Health turned on a dime to implement telehealth — the use of phones to facilitate remote clinical care. But what do you do for patients who don't have phones? Thanks to some out-of-the-box thinking, our staff at Pike Place Market clinic quickly pivoted to meet the needs of our patients.

"A solid amount of our patients don't have phone numbers, or phones for that matter," recalls Arthur Fernandez, clinic administrator for Pike Place Market clinic. Taking a novel approach to telehealth, our Pike clinic now provides clients the use of the clinic's conference room and phone from which to call their psychiatric nurse practitioner, nutritionist or social worker who are working remotely to observe safe social-distancing guidelines. This innovative thinking keeps both clients and staff safe. And, it's more critical than ever as Pike Place Market clinic responds to the community's unprecedented needs due to the pandemic. In fact, in 2020 the clinic served 30% more new clients than the year prior.

"Neighborcare has been incredibly flexible with patients and staff through this pandemic to not only figure out how to continue to provide health care, but also to figure out how do we keep people safe."

— Ashley Strauss, PhD

"It's not a solution to the problem, but it alleviates a barrier," says Fernandez, continuing, "Staff members are being as creative as we possibly can to meet clients where they're at and offer service."

Despite a year of unrelenting trauma, stress, exhaustion and grief, clinic staff continue to adapt and innovate to serve all of our community members. None of this would be possible without your unrelenting support for Neighborcare and the well-being of our community. Thank you for joining with us to make quality health care available for everyone who needs it.

"COVID-19 has deeply affected my patients, and has changed the way I practice patient care in many ways."

— Vanessa Buitrago, RN



Individuals, community organizations, and local businesses donated over 80,000 masks and face shields to Neighborcare Health since the pandemic began in March 2020.

Reducing Health Disparities for our Pregnant Patients

Quickly after the pandemic began in March 2020, Neighborcare pivoted to implement telehealth — the use of phones to facilitate remote clinical care. And while telehealth has been a great adaptation to continue to safely serve our patients during the pandemic, there are still many vital and essential services that can't be done over the phone.

Monitoring blood pressure during pregnancy, for instance, is an important part of prenatal care and can help providers watch for pre-eclampsia, a pregnancy complication that can develop in the second and third trimesters. Left untreated, pre-eclampsia can lead to serious — even fatal — complications for both the pregnant patient and baby. Black women are 60% more likely than white women to develop pre-eclampsia and have more serious complications, contributing to significant maternal and infant racial-ethnic health disparities.

“Our population is already at an increased risk for high blood pressure in pregnancy... we were wondering

how could we adapt to better serve our patients [while enlisting telehealth];” recalled Hodan Rage, RN, an obstetric nurse at Neighborcare Health at Columbia City.

Thanks to several of our generous partners, including the American Heart Association, the University of Washington, and Mama Amaan, Neighborcare Health is now able to distribute blood pressure cuffs directly to our pregnant patients for home monitoring. Patients are taught how to take their own blood pressure readings and given self-screening tools for stress and depression. By providing the cuffs and teaching patients how to do their own readings, pregnant patients need fewer in-person visits to Neighborcare, keeping both staff and patients safer as the pandemic continues.

“Through COVID we have learned to adapt and really lean on each other to provide the services we need in ways that we haven't before,” shared Rage. “It takes an entire village or an entire team to truly provide the services that our very diverse communities need.”



Building Relationships During COVID

Moria Andrews, BSN, RN, has been on the frontlines of Neighborcare's COVID-19 response and is one of the nurses on our Street Outreach Team. This team partners with Evergreen Treatment Services' REACH program to serve patients experiencing homelessness and connect with clients wherever they are — under overpasses, in encampments, on the streets, and works closely with other nurses in Neighborcare's Housing Health Outreach Team (HHOT).

As HHOT/REACH nurses, we are used to responding to and encountering the unexpected, our clients are often used to the unexpected as well. However, COVID-19 was and is a bit beyond the unexpectedness we are used to. And as a street outreach nurse, I knew my dedication and presence for our folks living outside was going to be needed more than ever.

In the beginning, a lot of my time was spent with the REACH outreach team, educating both our clients and the REACH outreach staff on COVID-19 and safe practices. Our HHOT team received a large donation of cloth masks, so I brought them and handed them out to clients while having a conversation about the virus. I was quickly reminded of the lack of laundry services for our clients, especially with a large number of services closing. So, I started drawing sharpie stars on the inside of the masks. This helped clients always wear the same side inside and try to remain as safe and clean as possible. The sharpie stars were a huge hit! And the different designs of the masks helped engage folks with a choice of mask, which created space for further conversation about the virus.

As the virus continued to spread and the seriousness was setting in, a lot of community spaces and resources that our clients access began to close. This, as expressed by many of my clients, made them feel even more alone and unsupported. In fact, some shared the belief that the virus was created to “isolate” them from society even more. This was a reality check for me. I knew I needed to be present and consistent more than ever, so our clients did not feel even more ignored and alone.

I continued all my same outreach and medical support but with COVID-19 precautions (social distancing when possible and mask use). I did wound care, suboxone refills and intakes over the phone with our physician support, and counseled clients. In addition, I handed out masks, hand sanitizer when it was available, tents, sleeping bags, socks, tarps, helped get folks signed up for stimulus checks, and went with REACH to hand out extra food and meals.

With all these new resources to support our folks, I have been able to build deeper connections with my clients, establish trust and help advocate for their needs. Having these resources has helped spark conversations and establish trust with clients that normally would not engage when I only had my nursing supplies in my outreach bag.

The above is an excerpt from a story originally published in Healing Hands, a publication of the Health Care for the Homeless Clinicians' Network.



neighborcare  health

1200 12th Ave S, Ste. 901
Seattle, WA 98144

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2364
Seattle WA

NEIGHBORS | SPRING 2021

STAY CONNECTED neighborcare.org  Neighborcare Health  YouTube NeighborcareHealth

OUR LOCATIONS

45th Street	Mercer Middle School
Youth Clinic at 45th Street	Meridian
Bailey Gatzert Elementary	Youth Clinic at New Horizons
Ballard	Pacific Tower
Central District	Pike Place Market
Chief Sealth International High School	Dental at Providence St. Peter Hospital
Columbia City	Rainier Beach
Dearborn Park International School	Robert Eagle Staff Middle School
Denny International Middle School	Roosevelt High School
Georgetown	Roxhill Elementary
High Point	St. Vincent de Paul – Aurora
Highland Park Elementary	Van Asselt Elementary
Lake City	Vashon Island High School
Lincoln High School	West Seattle Elementary
Madison Middle School	West Seattle High School
Magnuson	

Please join us April 21 to May 5 for Spring Give, an online fundraising event to raise critical funds for Neighborcare Health. With so much else going on in the world, access to health care shouldn't be something that our community worries about. Be a part of Spring Give and join us as we work together recover from this pandemic and prepare for a healthier future. Visit neighborcare.org/springgive to learn more.