

Christian Medical Clinic Celebrates Ten Years of Compassionate Care

by Jeanene Moore

As the *Christian Medical Clinic* prepares to celebrate ten years of dedicated service to the thousands of this community's uninsured residents in July, those committed to its ministry recognize even more clearly that the healthcare system in America has gaping holes which have left many hard-working people in the Grand Lake area caught in the middle. The *CMC* opened its door on July 12, 2001—serving 30 to 70 patients each week—in the gymnasium of Grove's First Baptist Church, at that time located on Main.

The original vision for the relief ministry's existence and operation was generated by Cathi Spencer, office manager for Dr. Rollin Bland, whose practice anchored the clinic since its inception. She quickly became the clinic's 'heart and soul', faithfully volunteering and serving as its coordinating entity for some eight years. After Dr. Bland moved his practice to Langley, taking some of his staff with him including Cathi, they were no longer able to offer personal service to the *CMC* or provide the network of ongoing support from the practice necessary, so the 'baton' of service was passed on.

Early in 2009, Nancy Flowers responded to an appeal for a clinic administrator from Randy Hamill, Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Vice Chairman of the Board for the *CMC*, and her pastor. He'd outlined the need for the clinic to continue with a new administrator amply armed with medical experience, administrative and relational skills, and a heart for Christian ministry. Administrator Nancy is a RN with a Masters in Public Health. She has worked in a flex position for INTEGRIS Grove Hospital as staff nurse in Medical/Surgical, and she served as a nursing volunteer at the clinic periodically for two years before taking her new position. Her 'heart' is definitely for the *CMC*!

The ministry moved its physical location to 501 E. 13th when Grove's First Baptist Church relocated to that address in the fall of 2009, with entrance on the east side of the church next to INTEGRIS Professional Center. "We were thrilled to be a part of that moving experience, said Flowers. "This was just another sign of God's blessing on, and his provision for, this ministry, as we continued to present Christ to people in this community."

The clinic sees patients ages 19 to 64 primarily from Delaware County, with 2/3 to 3/4 presenting with chronic problems like diabetes, COPD and arthritis, and also with all different kinds of pain issues including minor injuries and bites. "I love being here on Thursday nights interacting with the people, and most enjoyable for me is seeing patients receiving some help," Flowers said. It follows that her least favorite scenario is when patients' needs are not able to be met completely to resolve their issues.

Volunteer doctors, nurses, dentists, chiropractors, pastors, accountants, pharmacists, social workers and others converge weekly to help those needing medicine on the spot, a rotten tooth pulled or a back adjusted. Needs are prayed for and those eligible for patient

assistance are aided in qualifying and signing up. Individuals begin registering for help at 3 p.m. on Thursdays, and patients are seen by appropriate volunteer experts at 6 p.m.

A volunteer since the clinic opened, Dr. Zachary Bechtol is passionate about people with untreated diseases and those suffering from preventable illnesses not getting medical attention. He described it as a travesty and said, “The *CMC* has been a great place to see the community’s goodwill at work. These are our people in our community who need our services, and we simply must step up to the plate and help them at their point of need.”

The *CMC*’s mission would be severely handicapped without the continued support of INTEGRIS Grove Hospital. Laboratory and radiology testing, as well as needed surgical procedures, are made possible through the hospital and through the INTEGRIS Health Charity Care program. Many of the physicians associated with INTEGRIS also give of their time and talents. “The hospital’s reason for being here is to provide quality health care for Grove and the surrounding area. And our participation with the clinic helps more people have access to that care,” said hospital president Greg Martin.

There is always a need for medical personnel—physicians and other clinicians, dentists, chiropractors, nurses, medical assistants, etc. Lay persons are also needed to help with patient management and to assist as prayer partners. Financial contributions are welcome, as the *CMC* operates on private donations from local residents, churches and organizations with no government assistance or subsidies. Donations may be sent to the *Christian Medical Clinic* of Grand Lake, Inc., c/o Clara Mills, CPA, PO Box 451368, Grove, OK 74345.

Call Nancy Flowers at 918-787-5191 to volunteer your time, or to **share a personal experience as to how the *CMC* has served you or your family’s medical needs**. Those stories will be highlighted in future articles about the clinic’s tenth anniversary.