

Since 1988, I have had the enjoyed volunteering with some of the best and most compassionate health care providers in Indianapolis at Gennesaret Free Clinics. We started our clinic because there were inadequate healthcare resources in our city for the most poor. What began as a meager personal attempt to help a few persons blossomed into a full health care platform. Our services are directed to the uninsured and homeless of our city. We treat patients for medical problems. Our dentists treat all kinds of oral issues. We provide housing for men after hospitalization to fully recover. Our organization also reaches out to help through a Women's clinic.

Some object to volunteering in our clinic for the homeless and uninsured because they feel such programs amount to little more than a "band-aid" approach to a serious social wound. This may be a valid criticism. Yet as volunteers, we know for example that the woman we diagnose with bronchitis could not afford to purchase her necessary antibiotic prescription. As volunteers, we see first-hand that our efforts (and the free medication) make a difference for her. Even with many persons in our community who may be eligible for "Obama-care" coverage, we will continue to offer services either not covered by the Affordable Care Act and serve the many who will not be able to participate.

My wife's grandmother, Grandma Freeman used to say, "Use your time to build beautiful memories." Through volunteering at Gennesaret Free Clinic, many beautiful memories fill my heart. We started the clinic, on a cold February night in 1988. We went to a church that was being used to shelter 80 homeless men, women, and children; the people slept on the pews at night. A nurse and secretary from my office

joined me that first clinic. All our supplies were crammed in a steamer trunk. We used the church nursery. The only place to exam our patients was on the floor; we did this on our knees. An announcement was made that a doctor and nurse came for anyone who had a medical problem. Everyone stopped and suspiciously stared at us. Nobody ventured forth. Finally one brave soul came in. After his visit with us, he exited the room. The other people standing about inspected him for damage. He shrugged and ten people immediately got in line for the clinic.

Years later after starting 6 fully equipped shelter clinics served by hundreds of volunteer physicians, dentists, nurses and clerks, several community agencies helped us purchase a mobile clinic. We outfitted a recreation vehicle to serve those living out on the street. On one of our stops, dozens of desperate men gathered for health care and hygiene items. As we were triaging the ill, soap and shampoo was distributed to the crowd. In the rush, a man at the back of the group spoke up, "Excuse me, do you have any cologne?" We all laughed at the irony. Later I thought he just wanted to smell good for someone.

A bittersweet experience unfolded one evening this past winter in a homeless shelter. I watched a volunteer nurse as she carefully treated each of the men with extra respect and cheerfulness. She said it was a concrete way to reach out to the homeless. She added that her own son had shut her out of his life. In another city far away, he might be in a homeless shelter like the one we worked in that night. Through her volunteering, she symbolically reached out to her estranged son.

Fifteen years ago our clinic developed transitional housing for men to recuperate after hospitalization. The men have private rooms, personal

attention and ample time to recover physically, emotionally and spiritually after their hospital illness or surgery. We have witnessed dramatic personal transformations as 70% of the men leave our Health Recovery Program no longer homeless.

Now in our 26<sup>th</sup> year, Gennesaret Free Clinic will start a Women's Health Recovery Program. Now, women and their young children will be able to rehab and recover after illness. This facility will enable a healing time to get their lives back together again.

We all hope to help someone in their time of need. It has been my privilege and pleasure to care for our fellow citizens at Gennesaret Free Clinics.