



TEN YEARS AND COUNTING...

It all started over the dinner table; two couples who loved the Berkshires and wanted to make it better, stronger, more just. A discussion of healthcare led to the question of whether the community was being adequately served. After a study, it was determined that there was a shortage of affordable healthcare services for the hundreds, possibly thousands, who lacked adequate health insurance. Providing those services then became the priority.

Many people became enthusiastic partners; some made their mark and moved on, other pioneers stayed and created the dynamic and innovative program that has now provided in excess of 20,000 comprehensive healthcare visits for more than 2,000 individuals; services valued at over \$10 million! Happily, new volunteers and board members have joined throughout the last ten years. A dedicated staff provides the organizational structure to ensure quality and continuity.

Did you know?

- *More than 85% of our patients are employed but cannot afford insurance;*
- *Despite new state and federal health insurance initiatives, thousands of Berkshire residents and seasonal workers remain without coverage;*
- *Even when some coverage is available, not all healthcare services are always included;*
- *Case management, which assures coordination of care, accessible referrals when necessary, follow-up and outreach, is an integral part of the VIM experience.*

How do we make it work?

While VIM takes no federal or state subsidies, the numbers are nonetheless telling:

- More than 30,000 hours of clinical services have been provided by volunteer clinicians;
- Almost 40,000 volunteer hours are being donated by non-clinical volunteers.
- Over \$300,000 of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and services have been donated;
- Since its founding, almost five million dollars has been raised from individuals, businesses, and foundations in the region and beyond.

Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires was born and has thrived as a testimony of what a few caring individuals and a responsive community can accomplish. The need continues to grow; you can read more in this issue about the special populations, such as the noted arts community, and the many people impacted by the VIM program, as well as how you can participate.



10th Anniversary Co-Chair Catherine Mandel



10th Anniversary Co-Chair Lauren Spitz

Lauren Spitz and Catherine Mandel are chairing our exciting and event-filled 10th Anniversary Year. We hope you will join us to bring the program into its next decade stronger and more comprehensive than ever!

Access to Care?

What is Access to Care, and how can we know it even when we get it. This issue of the VIM Newsletter highlights a few of the issues related to obtaining healthcare:

- What are the needs of special populations, such as the substantial group of people who support our large arts community and special events;
- What does access include — what healthcare do we really need and what should it look like;
- Getting the word out about available care to the community that needs it;
- What is the impact of care on individuals when they find it;
- How can we support this important service to the Berkshires?

We value your feedback. Please feel free to contact us at www.vimberkshires.org to share your thoughts and ask questions about VIM! If you share your email address with us, we can send you occasional critical and timely information about healthcare and VIM.

HOLD THE DATE: EXCITEMENT AHEAD!
VIM 10TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
THIS YEAR AT SKI BUTTERNUT
AUGUST 21, 2014
MORE TO COME!

"America's Premier Cultural Resort"

ARTHUR PEISNER, VIM Chairman

Did you know that the arts account for more than 6,000 jobs and \$160,000,000 in economic activity in the Berkshires, according to The Berkshire Creative Economy Report? This world-class mecca for the visual, literary and performing arts takes more than a village to produce: actors, writers, musicians, dancers, artists, and all the supporting staff — sound and lighting technicians, set builders and decorators, gardeners and groundskeepers, kitchen and maintenance staff, ticket agents and ushers are all a part of the team. And we haven't even mentioned all the hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, and other retail businesses that depend on the tourists and second homeowners who are attracted by these cultural venues.

Unfortunately, many of those 6000 plus jobs in the cultural economy are part-time or seasonal and do not include employer sponsored health insurance.

More than 43% of the 3,402 artists who responded did not have health insurance; according to a survey of artists of all types conducted in August of 2013 by the Artists' Health Insurance Resource Center



(AHIRC) and the Future of Music Coalition. This represents more than double the national average of 18%.

- The vast majority, 88% of the uninsured respondents, cited cost as the primary reason they don't have insurance.

- Often it is not their actual level of income, but the irregularity and uncertainty that is typical of jobs in the arts, which precludes the substantial regular monthly premium commitment that health insurance requires.
- Performers are just a small fraction of the creative community that is uninsured.

The Affordable Care Act may eventually help to alleviate this situation to some degree, especially for the lowest income group who might qualify for expanded Medicaid or substantial subsidies. At present, however, the national debate has left many confused, frustrated and out in the cold. Despite the efforts of organizations that are conducting programs designed to help performing artists get coverage, like HeadCount, the Actors Fund and MusiCares, only a small percentage have been able to take advantage of the programs so far.

In response to this urgent problem, VIM has been conducting extensive outreach to the various cultural institutions and organizations to ensure that they know about our free health care services and inform their artists and support staff that we are here to help. Special posters and flyers have been provided and posted in appropriate locations throughout the county and our staff and volunteers are getting ready to handle the busy summer season — if it ever warms up!

You can help, too. As you sit in the shed or on the lawn with 15,000 other people watching James Taylor or Yo-Yo Ma, or at Shakespeare & Co., Jacob's Pillow, Barrington Stage, Berkshire Theater Festival, Mahaiwe and Colonial Theaters, Williamstown Theater Festival, Norman Rockwell Museum, Mass MOCA, the Clark Museum ... the list goes on and on ... think about all the people you can't see who helped to make it such a great evening — the ones backstage, those manning the food and souvenir concessions and those who will be cleaning up after you leave. And think about those artists still on their way up who are playing at a bar in Pittsfield or hanging their work in a gallery in Sheffield. Help ensure they all stay healthy by writing a check to VIM and sharing the news with your friends and fellow art lovers. We need your help to do this.

To Be or Not to Be: The Annual Physical

CAROL REIFE, MD, Medical Director

What should "Access to Care" really include? There is much controversy and debate surrounding the annual physical. Does it save lives? Will insurance companies pay for it?

Under the Affordable Care Act, insurers are required to cover the cost of annual physicals but what this means and what tests should be done is largely up to the individual provider.



Though studies repeatedly show that the annual exam itself does not affect health outcomes, most people agree that there is value in the visit to reinforce healthy behaviors and address individual concerns. Having a medical provider familiar with your medical history and with whom you have a good rapport is invaluable. Behaviors such as cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol and drug use can be addressed as can issues such as obesity, domestic violence and depression.

Open and meaningful communication with your health care provider is the key to achieving good results from your physical exam. Sharing concerns and seeking guidance will dictate how effective the physical examination is for you.

What a particular provider includes in an examination varies from person to person and depends on many factors including:

- Your age and history;
- The need to screen for high blood pressure as well as certain types of cancers;
- Your specific symptoms and concerns.

Several medical and scientific organizations use available research data to determine whether certain specific tests have an impact on disease outcomes, quality of life or mortality. Some of the current recommendations advise:

- There are no standard laboratory tests that are recommended during an annual physical.
- However a screening lipid panel is generally indicated in adults over age 20 every 5 years. Only if an abnormality is found or an intervention takes place

WE NEED YOU!

SUSAN MINNICH, *Volunteer Coordinator*

What does “access to care” mean for people who need you but don’t know you exist? Last summer VIM became aware of how many people in the Berkshires didn’t yet know about us and decided to reemphasize community outreach. Our energetic and creative outreach committee has taken on this challenge and is developing new audiences for our comprehensive services. Since early autumn 2013 these effective and imaginative volunteers have been busy behind the scenes in the Berkshires. Led by Chair Nancy Mills, volunteers include Estella Bodnar, Matt Mandel, Kenneth Mayer, Carol and Ross Reife, Carolina Rosenstein, Ellen Rowntree and Jane Salamon.

It’s no surprise the group has been so successful ... they located community need, and then devised a superbly organized plan. Lists were made by town of sites to visit and volunteers assigned to go there. Posters were designed and printed in three languages. From Pittsfield to Sheffield these flyers and posters were hung in the back offices of restaurants, hotels, landscapers ... places where people needing healthcare might work. They were distributed to libraries, laundromats, town halls ... places where people needing healthcare might visit.

Representatives from other groups were invited to visit VIM to learn more about us ... and to design collaborative programs, with the aim of strengthening services to eligible individuals. Stories and PSAs were written and advertisements placed in local radio stations, and in newsletters and town newspapers.

Anticipating that there will be individuals who do not register in time for the Affordable Care Act and so are caught without health insurance during the transition to the ACA, primary care providers in the area were alerted to our services, in case patients without insurance appear in their offices expecting medical services.

Now we need you! The outreach effort has demonstrated the importance of reaching out, but you, the donors, volunteers and members of the Berkshire community can make it even more effective! You are an important ambassador for VIM, helping to recruit patients and volunteers. When you are talking with friends, relatives, neighbors, coworkers, please be sure to tell people about our services. Though they may not be personally in need of VIM services, they may have friends, neighbors, relatives or employees who do need medical care. Word of mouth is the most effective tool in our rural community. We will be happy to send you brochures, flyers or other information to share with your own organizations and groups. Together we can make access to care a reality for more Berkshire residents.

SHOPPER ALERT!

**SAVE THE DATES!
August 15-30**

Evergreen Fine American Crafts, a well-known Great Barrington gem, is launching a “Give Back” to the community campaign to celebrate its 35th year in business, according to Barbara Watkins. **Mention VIM when you shop** at Evergreen from August 15 – 30, and 10% of your purchase will be donated to Volunteers in Medicine Berkshires. Evergreen is open daily at 291 Main Street, Gt. Barrington; (413) 528-0511.

VIM to Celebrate 10th Anniversary with Fabulous Chefs’ Dinner at Wheatleigh on June 2, 2014

VIM Berkshires’ annual Fabulous Chef’s Dinner has an exciting new location this year as the Clinic marks ten years of serving the healthcare needs of uninsured adults in the Berkshires.

“We are thrilled to announce that our Dinner will be at the beautiful Wheatleigh in Lenox on June 2nd,” said Dinner Chair Vicki Bonnington. “Chef Jeffrey Thompson and his wonderful staff will offer an amazing four-course gourmet meal in one of the most stunning locations in the Berkshires.”

Wheatleigh, a Gilded Age “summer cottage” set on 22 acres, was an AAA Five Diamond Award Winner in 2013. New York financier Henry H. Cook built the mansion in 1893 as a wedding present for his daughter, who married into Spanish royalty. Today, the Wheatleigh Dining Room under the direction of Chef Jeffrey Thompson has earned a reputation as one of the top restaurants in the Berkshires.

“This Fabulous Chefs’ Dinner kicks off our 10th Anniversary celebration, so it’s a very special event for us,” said VIM Board Chair Art Peisner. “The restaurant at Wheatleigh can only accommodate up to 80 guests and we expect tickets to this always popular gathering to sell quickly.”

Tickets will be \$200 each for Friends of VIM and \$250 each for Underwriters of the Dinner. Please join us on June 2nd in support of VIM and its critical mission of providing health care for the uninsured of Berkshire County.

Drinks and canapés will be served at 6:30 pm, followed by dinner at 7:30. Special wine selections will be provided by Domaney’s Liquors and Fine Wines of Great Barrington. Valet parking will be available at no additional charge. To order tickets, please contact the VIM Berkshires office at 413-528-4014.



Tributes

VIM is pleased to accept contributions recognizing special occasions in the lives of family, friends, and colleagues.

In Honor of Denyse Adler
Elizabeth & Alan Jaffe

In Honor of Michael Ballon
Karen & Robert Youdelman

In Honor of Mrs. Tess Blake
Alan Berk

In Honor of Simeon Brinberg's 80th Birthday
Jane & Alan Salamon

In Honor of David Grover
Dan & Linda Dillon

In Honor of Matt Mandel
Diane Pearlman & Jeffrey Diamond

In Honor of Kenneth & Katja Mayer
Elizabeth Knobler

In Honor of George Raymond's 80th Birthday
Gustave G. Nelson
Seymour & Iris Schwartz

In Honor of Michael Richman
Paula & Tom Doyle
Jeffrey Thomases, Swavelle-Millcreek Fabrics

In Honor of Mr. & Mrs. James Riordan
Alan Berk

In Honor of Elaine Roberts' 80th Birthday
Jane & Alan Salamon

In Honor of Ellen Rowntree
Malcolm & Barbara Bayliss

In Honor of Cricket Saurel
Anne Chase

In Honor of David Schecker's Birthday
Larry Schecker

In Honor of Dr. Phillip Schneider's Birthday
Sarah Papier Ph.D.

In Honor of Dan & Kay Serebrakian
Alan Berk

In Honor of Steve Shatz's Retirement
Harvey & Rita Simon

In Honor of Dr. & Mrs. Paul Smilow
Dr. Gerald & Roberta Friedman

In Honor of Paul Smilow's 80th Birthday
Elly, Lynnie & David

In Honor of Her Dad, Paul Smilow
Jill Smilow-Brick

In Honor of Paul Smilow
Suzanne & Howard Gorham

In Honor of Ilana Steinhauer
Judi & David Lazan

In Honor of the Marriage of Sharon Strassfeld & Michael Ramella
Bonita & Harvey Ganot

In Honor of Joan F. Wing's Birthday
Delight & Paul Dodyk

In Memory of Our Beautiful Aunt, Helen Albertazzi
Diana & Albert Wellington

In Memory of Anne & Ernest Schnesel's Beloved Brother, Alan Arbuse
Jane & Alan Salamon

In Memory of Mary W. Doores
Larry Doores & Janet R. Wolfe

In Memory of Mary Harrigan and Ellen McDermott
Your Community Shop

In Memory of Diana Harwood
Ed & Beth Domaney

In Memory of John Huska
Holly Hunter

In Memory of Robyn Kaufmann
Hildi B. Kaufmann

In Memory of Richard Lindner
David Keator & The Keator Group
Pamala Kurtzer
Deborah BerchKurz
Dr. Ruth Lebovitz-Markovits
Maurie Perl
Stephen & Phyllis Schwartz

In Memory of Her Husband, Dale Masters
Linda Masters

In Memory of William P. Murtagh
Ellen Murtagh

In Memory of David Papier, MD
Carol Andrea Whitcomb

In Memory of Her Husband, David Poutasse, MD
Margaret Poutasse

In Memory of Leonard Simon
John & Joyce Considine
Timothy & Janice Hanna
Philip & Jean McAdam

In Memory of Julie Weiss' Son Kenneth Weiss
Shirley Marks

*If you would like to honor someone by making a gift to VIM Berkshires,
please call the clinic at 413-528-4014*

Sick Care or Health Care?

TRICIA BEVAN, *Volunteer*

"I have not seen a doctor for 20 years — and now I cannot work. I am in pain all the time. I REALLY need help."

This is not a unique story at VIM.



Our patients range from aspiring Americans who do not qualify for full insurance to established citizens who for one reason or another have found themselves without health coverage. Some patients come to VIM after weeks, or even years of enduring a health problem. In some cases what could have become a life-changing diagnosis is addressed early enough to make a difference.

Mrs. "R" walked into VIM unable to care for herself due to debilitating rheumatoid

arthritis and just two short months later, after being seen by a partnering rheumatologist, is working full time and able to care not only for herself but for her family.

Patients like these who struggle with chronic illness but have no primary care giver, can rely on VIM clinicians to help manage their symptoms and ultimately prevent more costly outcomes for themselves, their families and society at large.

VIM's patient-centered, top-of-the-line, clinically integrated approach to care makes all the difference.

Through a comprehensive approach to the whole person, in addition to general medical care, mental health, dentistry, optometry, nutritional counseling and acupuncture services are included as needed.

"Mary R," an obese patient with no medical insurance, who had not seen a physician in years, presented at VIM with sky-high blood pressure. On that same day she was evaluated by medical staff, tests ordered, a meeting scheduled with a nutritionist, and an appointment made with a mental health provider...now that's ACCESS!

Months later, at one of several follow up visits, "Mary" showed overall improvement in health, with weight loss, controlled blood pressure, and increased productivity in her own

life. It's personalized, it's comprehensive, it's compassionate... and it works.

"Jack C," an unemployed man in his 50's, cannot afford insurance; divorced and alcohol dependent he feels the odds are stacked against him. He came to VIM asking for a new set of teeth to prepare for an upcoming job interview. Additional medical and other services were offered that gradually helped him back on his feet, prepared him to re-join the workforce, and directed him towards an affordable healthcare plan.

Our patients often arrive with a single complaint, but medical staff often see underlying factors that may contribute to the illness, and can offer on-site or referral expertise that expand basic patient care.

Some patients may be helped by psychological support, others need dental care or an eye exam and new glasses, still others may need medications they cannot afford; for some, pain will be relieved by acupuncture.

These comprehensive services are provided with mutual respect, sensitivity and caring by volunteers, and staff. Patients, who for whatever their varied circumstances find themselves temporarily excluded from the system, find holistic care and critical help at VIM.

The Annual Physical

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is there a need to repeat this more frequently.

- Screening for diabetes in asymptomatic people is not done routinely, but may be advised for overweight adults, those over 45 years of age and in patients at risk for heart disease.
- The CDC recommends that HIV screening be part of routine testing for everyone aged 13 – 64.
- People at increased risk should also be screened for sexually transmitted diseases.

Most other tests are not generally advised for healthy patients. Again, if a patient makes a reasonable request for additional testing, many providers will accommodate the request.

Periodic screening for certain types of cancer can decrease the risk dying from these cancers; for example, periodic use of stool cards and colonoscopy to screen for colon cancer, and Pap smears to screen for cervical cancer.

- Whether mammograms actually decrease risk of death from breast cancer and at what age and how frequently they should be done are matters of debate and should be discussed with your provider.

- Similarly, the PSA blood test used as a screening tool has not been scientifically shown to decrease mortality from prostate cancer and patients are advised to discuss whether or not to have this test with their health care provider. Additional tests to screen for other types of cancer are generally not advocated as part of a routine exam.

However, each patient has a unique personal or family history, and after examination, some additional tests might be appropriate.

Annual examinations are a good time to update immunizations; some, such as those against measles, mumps, rubella, HPV, and hepatitis are recommended at an early age. Diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus must be repeated periodically. Pneumococcal vaccine against a specific type of pneumonia is recommended for people over age 65, or those with specific risk. Influenza vaccine

should be obtained every year.

Annual dental and optometry visits remain a good plan.

One of the most important things to remember about staying healthy is to listen to your body. Eat foods that are healthy and eat in rea-



sonable portions. Try to exercise daily. If something is wrong, don't delay seeing your health-care provider. And even if you are feeling well, it may be a good idea to schedule that annual physical after all.

