

CBR '21

Community Benefit Report

A community
need for behavioral
and mental
health resources

ORLANDO HEALTH[®]

In 2021, the effects of COVID-19 were felt profoundly both inside and outside our hospitals' walls. The summer months brought the pandemic's biggest spike in hospitalizations. But across the region, quieter forces were at work.

Continued uncertainty about the ever-mutating virus was fueling a behavioral health crisis of stress, anxiety and depression. Our neighbors who had never before depended on mental health resources began to rely on them in increasing numbers, and the need quickly outpaced the capacity.

To address this secondary spike that stretched from living rooms to emergency rooms, Orlando Health joined others in the community to offer and support **vital behavioral health services**. Within these pages, we tell their stories.

We highlight the enhanced initiatives at well-regarded organizations such as **Grace Medical Home and Community Health Centers**, both of which have received funding through our community grant program to increase access to these services.

We show how Orlando Health expanded **addiction resources** at a time when opioid-related deaths in Florida were rising nearly 50 percent, and Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties were reporting the highest overdose rates in the state. In the emergency room of Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC), an **opioid outreach program** helped tackle the ongoing crisis and its impact on behavioral health.

And we celebrate the morale-boosting initiatives that recognized our **healthcare heroes** providing expert and compassionate care throughout it all.

Orlando Health has dedicated additional resources to addressing mental and behavioral health issues in our communities. In 2021, the healthcare system added new services and several behavioral

health clinicians to the ranks of Orlando Health Medical Group. In partnership with **Acadia Healthcare**, Orlando Health is working to expand inpatient and outpatient programs, enhance community outreach activities and develop new comprehensive psychiatric strategies across the entire healthcare system. Plans also are underway for a **new hospital** dedicated to treating those experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

Together, these efforts illustrate Orlando Health's commitment to our community, our partners and the neighbors we serve regardless of the challenges they may face.



David Strong
President and CEO
Orlando Health



CBR '21

Highlighting Orlando Health Community Benefit

This report highlights grant recipients from the Orlando Health Community Grant Program, which is supported and managed by the Community Benefit Department. This report also highlights Orlando Health's total value given back to the community through community benefit efforts.

CBR '21 is produced by the Office of External Affairs and Community Benefit.

For more information on the Orlando Health Community Grant Program, contact CommunityBenefit@OrlandoHealth.com.

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On the Cover: Doris Negroni (right) is greeted by former Grace Medical Home intern Myra Furey.

2021 Grant Recipients

Community Health Centers, Inc.

Pine Hills Center Behavioral Mental Health Services Expansion

Covenant House of Florida

Bright Beginnings Parenting Education and Child Development Program

Florida Department of Health in Seminole County

Community Mobile Health Integrated Services

Florida Department of Health in Seminole County

Educación Sobre Diabetes en Español

Grace Medical Home

Food is Medicine

Orange Blossom Family Health

Diabetes Clinic

Hebni Nutrition Consultants, Inc.

Applaud Diabetes Prevention Program

Libby's Legacy Breast Cancer Foundation

Cancer Screening Initiative and Mammogram Access Project

Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center Institute for Advanced Rehabilitation

Neuro Friendly Restaurant Initiative

Orlando Health Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women and Babies

Booster Seat Safety Awareness

Osceola Council on Aging, Inc.

Health Access and Physician Partnership Initiatives (HAPPI)

Zebra Coalition

Case Management for Coordinated Clinical Support

ORLANDO HEALTH AT A GLANCE*

Orlando Health is an **\$8 billion** not-for-profit healthcare organization and community-based network of physician practices, hospitals and outpatient care centers throughout Central Florida.

- Orlando Health includes 16 wholly-owned hospitals and emergency departments
- An extensive network of physicians representing more than 100 specialties and primary care
- Rehabilitation Services
- Cancer Institutes
- Heart Institutes
- Imaging and Laboratory Services
- Wound Care Centers
- Physician Offices for Adults and Pediatrics
- Skilled Nursing Facilities
- Inpatient Behavioral Health Facility
- Home Health Services in partnership with LHC Group
- Urgent Care Centers in partnership with CareSpot Urgent Care



Our Expertise

- Cancer Care
- Digestive Health
- Heart and Vascular
- Neonatology and Women's Health
- Neurosciences
- Orthopedics and Sports Medicine
- Pediatrics
- Primary Care
- Surgery

Community Benefit Financials

\$133,576,577 Charity Care

Charity care is the total cost of services incurred by Orlando Health to provide medical services to those patients who have demonstrated their inability to pay. Charity care does not include bad debt.

+ \$80,060,854

Community Benefit Programs and Services

+ \$178,070,850

MEDICAID and other Means-Tested Programs Shortfalls**

\$391,708,281

Total Community Benefit

Total Value to the Community \$782,115,746

+ \$62,210,636 MEDICARE Shortfalls**

+ \$327,552,060 Bad Debt

Bad debt is the total cost of services incurred by Orlando Health for services provided to patients who have not paid their bills and who have not demonstrated their inability to pay.

+ \$644,769

Community-Building Activities

Community-building activities include programs that address the root causes of health problems, such as poverty, homelessness and environmental problems. Costs of these activities include cash, in-kind donations and budgeted expenditures for the development of a variety of community-building programs and partnerships above reimbursement.

*Based on: A Guide for Planning & Reporting Community Benefit, Catholic Health Association (CHA) of the United States, 2020 edition. **Medicare, Medicaid and other means-tested programs pay Orlando Health less than it costs the organization to provide care to its Medicare, Medicaid and other means-tested programs patients. The amounts shown are the actual costs to provide these services above reimbursement.

Providing access to nearly 3 MILLION Central Florida residents

3,192,028

Outpatient Visits*



10

Wholly Owned Hospitals

ORANGE COUNTY
Orlando Health
Orlando Regional
Medical Center

Orlando Health
Arnold Palmer Hospital
for Children

Orlando Health
Winnie Palmer Hospital
for Women and Babies

Orlando Health
Dr. P. Phillips Hospital

Orlando Health –
Health Central Hospital

Orlando Health
Horizon West Hospital

SEMINOLE COUNTY
Orlando Health
South Seminole Hospital

LAKE COUNTY
Orlando Health
South Lake Hospital

PINELLAS COUNTY
Bayfront Health
St. Petersburg

OSCEOLA COUNTY
Orlando Health
St. Could Hospital

142,115

Patient Admissions**



3,133

Beds***

18,136

Babies Born



474,118

Emergency Visits****

9,829

Trauma Cases

75,390

Surgeries*****

One of Central Florida's **Largest** Employers

23,155

Team Members

3,217

Unique Physicians

346

Medical Residents

198

Faculty Members

One of **6** MAJOR teaching hospitals in Florida

A Statutory Teaching Hospital System with:



10

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

6

PHARMACY RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

24

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

Long-Standing Community Hospitals offering the region's only **LEVEL ONE Trauma Center, plus:**

A major cancer center



The area's first heart program

Specialty Hospitals dedicated to children, women and babies



*Includes hospitals, physician enterprises, imaging centers, ambulatory surgery centers and CareSpot. Excludes emergency and women's triage. **Excluding newborns. ***Licensed acute beds and skilled nursing licensed beds. ****Excludes Orlando Health Winnie Palmer and Orlando Health South Lake women's triage emergency room visits. *****Excludes labor and delivery surgeries.

A Saving Grace

For Orange County's uninsured in need of medical and spiritual care, Grace Medical Home is a welcome haven. People walk into the 19,000-square-foot building on East Concord Street in Orlando as strangers, become patients and quickly evolve into family.

“Grace is not a home where you live, but where all your needs are met,” says Stephanie Nelson Garris, JD, chief executive officer for Grace Medical Home. “Our approach to care takes a patient’s entire well-being into consideration so every patient is not only medically healthy, but spiritually and emotionally healthy as well.”

Established in 2010, Grace provides comprehensive, whole-person care to low-income patients from birth to 64 years old who cannot afford health insurance and do not qualify for government assistance. Once enrolled, Grace’s patients have access to

primary and dental care, more than 35 on-site specialties, chronic disease management, prescription assistance, care coordination, labs and imaging.

In addition to staff physicians and nurses, Grace depends on more than 600 clinical and nonclinical volunteers who annually donate their services at the facility. In 2021, the charitable care clinic handled over 16,000 patient visits. The medical care available at Grace has reduced unnecessary ER visits for their patients, which would have totaled more than \$2.4 million since 2015.

By offering all its healthcare services under one roof, Grace makes it easier for impoverished patients to access the full spectrum of treatments they may need. “When your clients are emotionally or physically drained, as many in need were during the pandemic, you want to knock barriers down for them,” says Zachary Hudson, director of business development for Orlando Health. “I have always appreciated that about Grace Medical Home. They remove barriers, provide assistance and guide patients through the process – all in one place.”

Mental Health Matters

Grace began offering mental health counseling in 2014, screening every patient through the Patient Health Questionnaire-9. Those in need are referred to a counselor. Grace has a psychiatric nurse practitioner on staff, as well as medical social work and mental health counseling interns who see patients. In 2021, counselors handled more than 1,700 mental health visits.

With COVID-19’s arrival, the demand for mental health care skyrocketed. When asked, 70 percent of Grace Medical Home patients reported one or more signs of stress, anxiety or depression due to the pandemic.

To help expand patient access to therapy, the Orlando Health Community Grant Program provided funding for Grace to add another mental health counseling intern. The grant allowed Grace to triple the number of patients receiving care from 10-15 per week to more than 40. Recognizing the immediate need for additional mental and behavioral health



“Therapy is helping me take away my anxiety. There is no shame in that and no shame in asking for help.” – Doris Negroni

“Being home and isolated with COVID brought a lot of issues to the surface. We had couples come with communication problems or conflicts with their children exacerbated by everyone suddenly being home.”

Nirvana Muñiz,
Director of Social Services
Grace Medical Home



resources, Orlando Health has extended funding for this grant through 2023.

Working Through the Worry

Doris Negroni first learned about Grace Medical Home seven years ago through her church. She and her husband, Louis, had fallen on hard times and found themselves without resources or insurance.

At Grace, clinicians discovered Negroni suffered severe anxiety about taking medicine, brought on by a traumatic medical experience years earlier. “It was horrible,” she says. “I couldn’t even take an aspirin without a full-blown anxiety attack. I was so afraid the doctors at Grace would dismiss me for non-compliance like past doctors had done.”

Instead, her new providers suggested counseling. Negroni worked with Grace mental health

intern Myra Furey on different techniques to help ease her fears. Then, she caught COVID-19.

“I got it bad,” says Negroni. “Eighteen days and nights I burned with fever. I suffered. But I could not, would not take the medicine they said I needed to clear my lungs.”

Without medication, Negroni realized she would eventually succumb to COVID-induced pneumonia. “I understood the situation,” she says, crediting the patience of the doctors and counselors at Grace for helping her overcome her anxiety enough to save her life.

“I cried and cried but finally forced myself to take those antibiotics,” she says. “I think that was my turning point.”

Diagnosed with general anxiety disorder and still working with her counselor, Negroni is a work in progress. “But I have hope now,”

she says. “Thanks to Grace and to Myra, I am getting better.”

Service Above Self

Almost 200,000 people in Orange County lack health insurance. “These are not all homeless or unemployed people,” says Nirvana Muñiz, a licensed clinical social worker and the director of social services at Grace Medical Home. “Many are living paycheck to paycheck, scraping by each month to provide for their family while the cost of living keeps rising.”

The pandemic has been devastating for the working poor. “More than 50 percent of our patients had their salaries or work hours cut during COVID,” says Garris. “They worry about losing those basic needs you and I take for granted – paying rent, buying food, keeping the utilities on.”

When people are affected financially, it forces tough choices.

Many pushed their own health to the sidelines to provide for their families.

“If you have kids to feed, it’s not just about you,” says Hudson. “And if you are used to providing for them and no longer have that capability, it’s added stress. If you have to make a choice between buying food or buying medicine because you’re having some abdominal discomfort, which one’s it going to be?”

During the pandemic, these mental and emotional stresses often manifested as physical illness, sending patients to Grace complaining of stomach pains, headaches or backaches. Fortunately, the comprehensive healthcare center houses more than 35 specialty services under one roof, providing primary care doctors at Grace with instant access to in-house experts. Doctors could pivot quickly when a patient’s issues demanded a different therapy.

“If there is no physical cause to a patient’s ailments, medical providers will suggest counseling,” says Muñiz. “Because we are integrated, an on-site mental health professional can come to the exam room immediately and begin working with the patient. This access also makes treatment more sustainable.”

A Family Affair

The pandemic has been particularly hard on families cooped up together at home for weeks on end. The tension of too much togetherness can negatively affect an entire household, causing tempers to flare.

“Being home and isolated with COVID brought a lot of issues to the surface,” says Muñiz. “We had

couples come with communication problems or conflicts with their children exacerbated by everyone suddenly being home. These issues were there before the pandemic, but no one noticed them. Suddenly, the whole family is together 24/7 and people realize ‘Hey, this isn’t working. We need help.’ ”

Such was the case with Domingo and Briseida and their children. When COVID-19 shut down the local economy, the couple lost their jobs. “I was a driver and my wife worked as a housekeeper,” says Domingo, who prefers his family’s last name not be used.

Professional radio producers in their home country, the couple sought asylum in America several years ago. As COVID-19 continued, the strain began to take its toll on their family. Already receiving medical care at Grace, the couple learned about opportunities for counseling during a wellness call from one of the organization’s pastors.

Once aware of the service, the couple began receiving therapy. “They were committed to their relationship and their family,” says Muñiz. “They did their part, coming here twice a week for counseling. They were seen together, then separately, then as a family. Their kids were amazed with their parents’ changes, so they started counseling with us as well. They were all so successful.”

The family, who now has insurance and has left Grace, credits therapy for bringing them closer. “Counseling saved our family in so many ways,” says Domingo. “Grace has given us trust and confidence and renewed our belief that others genuinely care.”

Orlando Health Grant at Work*

Number of patients screened

1,247

Number of referrals made to psychiatric APRN

485

Number of appointments with psychiatric APRN

463

Number of referrals made to a mental health counselor

466

Number of appointments with a mental health counselor

2,196

*Service extended beyond FY21

Dr. Jocelyn Pichardo, vice president and chief medical officer of Community Health Centers, Inc. (CHC)

J. Pichardo, MD
VP/Chief Medical Officer
Family Medicine

Compassionate Connections

The COVID-19 pandemic not only took a toll on the physical health of Central Florida residents, it also weighed heavily on their minds. For some, sequestered alone in their homes, it manifested in severe anxiety. For others, deep depression or grief overwhelmed them as they lost their jobs, homes, health or loved ones.

Dr. Jocelyn Pichardo and the team at Community Health Centers, Inc. (CHC) saw the mental health fallout firsthand. "About 3.8 percent of adults in Florida live with serious mental health conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, substance use disorder and anxiety," says Dr. Pichardo, CHC vice president and chief medical officer of the community-driven healthcare organization. "The isolation and stress of the pandemic exacerbated these issues. In 2021, one in four patients seen at all our sites was treated for a behavioral or mental health concern."

CHC provides comprehensive, compassionate healthcare for more than 70,000 patients annually at 15 clinics in underserved communities of Orange and Lake counties. To make care easier to access,

medical, dental and other care services are housed under one roof at most locations. Behavioral/mental health services are offered at their Winter Garden, Forest City, Pine Hills, Leesburg, Four Corners and Groveland centers. In addition, all CHC locations offer telehealth visits to help reduce transportation barriers many patients may experience.

Granting Help

As the pandemic drifted into its second year, CHC's Pine Hills location saw increases in patient anxiety, depression, substance use and violence, intensified by high rates of unemployment, isolation and other stresses caused by the chaos of COVID-19. To address these concerns, CHC determined a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) was necessary

for Pine Hills. They submitted a grant application to the Orlando Health Community Grant Program and were awarded \$50,000 to increase access for affordable behavioral/mental health care.

The impact was felt immediately. "It's of great advantage to our community to have the licensed clinical social worker here at the clinic, right at our fingertips," says Dr. Pichardo, who also provides primary care at the Pine Hills clinic. "The patient feels supported by a warm handoff to help because it overcomes the barriers of 'what do I do now?' and gets them treatment sooner."

One young patient with a severe psychiatric disorder arrived for a primary care visit with his mother. "She was very concerned about her son," says Dr. Pichardo. "We were able to just pick up the phone, call our behavioral health provider on-site and immediately connect that patient for help. It was wonderful."

So was the relief she saw in her patient's face – and his mother's.

"The one social worker supported by the Orlando Health grant gave 260 new patients access to care at Pine Hills last year," says Molly Ferguson, CHC director of government relations and grant management. "It might not seem like a lot to some, but each of those people had multiple visits and was connected to other needed services. The impact on lives was immeasurable."

Connecting Care

Despite the overwhelming need for mental health care brought on by the pandemic, overcoming cultural and societal barriers can be challenging for patients. To help, CHC primary care providers

"The connection between physical and mental health has a significant impact on healing and recovery. When a patient has feelings of sadness or life challenges, it is often difficult to focus on physical health. Alternatively, if a patient is experiencing chronic pain, symptoms of depression or anxiety can arise. CHC is committed to comprehensive, whole person care. Establishing the Pine Hills CHC clinic as a one stop shop where medical services easily collaborate on care planning has made a significant difference in patient outcomes and satisfaction."

Randee Poepelman
Behavioral Health Coordinator



conduct regular behavioral/mental health screenings for all patients annually, and more often if needed.

"Our patients often feel more comfortable sharing their concerns with their trusted family doctor," says Ferguson. "They may come in for their diabetes, and we discover an underlying mental health problem. Their doctor can immediately refer them to our social worker on-site or through telehealth and get them help that day."

Patients with mental health disorders often are challenged by daily activities, let alone navigating the complexities of healthcare. "I have walked into the exam room and had patients just start crying because they feel overwhelmed," says Dr. Pichardo. "Having me initiate a mental health referral and

make an appointment removes an obstacle to care."

Once referred, treatment focuses on prevention, assessment, diagnosis, treatment/intervention and follow-up as well as counseling and crisis services. A dedicated behavioral health case manager follows up on primary care referrals and assists social workers. If a higher level of care is needed, patients are referred to a CHC psychiatrist or partner organization. If medication is appropriate, there is a low-cost pharmacy on-site at each clinic.

The primary care doorway also removes the stigma of seeking mental health help. "The only way to improve mental health services is to embed them into primary care," says Tyler Davis, Orlando Health's

administrator of patient care services – behavioral health. "By conveniently offering mental health care in the same facility as primary care, you shift the dynamic, making it easier to accept treatment from the start. Being connected by a trusted doctor can be a relief."

One-Stop Shop

CHC clinicians are sensitive to the diverse needs of their community and work with patients to address underlying aspects that may contribute to behavioral/mental health issues. "One patient came to see us experiencing depression symptoms," says Randee Poepelman, behavioral health coordinator at CHC. "Through conversation, we discovered she was homeless because of intimate

partner violence. There was a history of unhealthy relationships and no human safety net."

Once established with CHC mental health professionals, the young person learned coping mechanisms through meditation and therapy and began to improve. "She has since gotten shelter, a job, enrolled in school and reestablished a relationship with one parent," says Dr. Pichardo. "It is a great success story that entered through the primary care door."

During her primary care visit, another patient shared she was anxious. Clinicians discovered she had just lost her mother and was experiencing extreme grief. She was referred for mental health care. Through therapy and meditation exercises, her anxiety lessened and she began to move forward.

"When you lose someone, especially as a caregiver, you cope not just with the grief, but occasionally also with guilt," says Dr. Pichardo. "Dealing with this all during the isolation of a pandemic created overwhelming worry for the mental and physical well-being of our communities."

CHC may have found the elusive formula – early intervention and collaborative, whole-person treatment navigated by a patient's family doctor at one convenient location.

"The easier it is to access mental health care, the more care people can get," says Orlando Health's Davis. "Creating a judgment-free zone for people to ask for help breaks down multiple barriers. It's tough to say, 'I am having this problem, and I need help,' when you feel like no one understands."

Orlando Health Grant at Work*

CHC submitted their grant proposal with a goal of reaching

225
Patients

CHC closed out the year with a total of

660

patients receiving care through the grant funding provided by Orlando Health

Of those 660 patients,

24%

were new patients

In total, the 660 patients received behavioral or mental health support through

1,774
Visits

A bridge between addiction and care

The Opioid Outreach Coordinator at Orlando Health connects patients with opioid use disorder (OUD) and co-occurring mental health diagnoses to much-needed care and services, both within the hospital walls and out in the community. With her knowledge and expertise working in concert with her passion for serving this population, Jaime Bridges is able to get patients what they need – and meet them where they are at – on their care and recovery journey.

(Left) Jaime Bridges, opioid outreach coordinator at Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center – connecting with patients, assessing their risk factors and determining their needs.



Last year, while the public's attention was consumed with COVID-19, another deadly plague continued to quietly ravage Central Florida's emergency rooms. Fueled by pain pills, heroin and fentanyl, the opioid epidemic simmered silently behind the headline – grabbing scenes of the pandemic.

Increased availability, potency and cheap street price, combined with the stress and isolation caused by the pandemic, have made opioid use a major challenge. "When the pandemic started, everyone focused attention on COVID-19 and rightly so," says Josef Thundiyl, MD, emergency medicine physician and medical toxicologist at Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC). "But the opioid epidemic never stopped."

Instead, opioid-related deaths in Florida spiked almost 50 percent during COVID-19, with Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties consistently reporting the highest overdose rates in the state, according to the Florida Department of Health.

Navigating the Situation

To tackle the growing opioid epidemic, Orlando Health increased the availability of addiction services in Orlando Health ORMC's emergency room (ER) with a comprehensive opioid avoidance program. The program includes an

"My personal experience helps me relate. When I tell them I was a cop, and I've been where they are, it shows addiction can happen to anybody and that there really is hope for recovery."

– Jaime Bridges



education component, as well as medication assisted treatment (MAT) and the addition of an opioid outreach coordinator trained to recognize people struggling with or at risk for opioid use disorder (OUD).

"We received a MAT grant to help with harm reduction," says Lauren Vagelakos, senior grant manager, Orlando Health Foundation. "Medications like buprenorphine are prescribed while patients are still in the hospital to block opioid withdrawal symptoms and stem cravings between discharge and their outpatient appointment, which could be up to five days. MAT breaks the cycle of patients going back out onto the streets, overdosing and landing back in the ER – or worse."

Another grant provided funding for Jaime Bridges' position as the opioid outreach coordinator. Bridges connects with patients who enter through the ER and assesses their risk factors and care needs in real time. She makes treatment referrals, coordinates clinical and preventive care services, and provides additional resources as needed.

Some accept help more readily than others. "When I go into a patient's room, I meet them where they are," says Bridges. "I ask them, 'How is it going? How bad is this? Where are you at?' Some patients literally disappear after speaking with me because they're not ready for help yet. We don't judge. Addiction is a disease, not a choice."

Bridges should know. A licensed social worker and former law enforcement officer, she also is a recovered opioid addict.

"I understand our patients' needs," says Bridges, who overcame a decade-long dependence after being prescribed opiates for an injury as an Orlando police officer. "My personal experience helps me relate. When I tell them I was a cop, and I've been where they are, it shows addiction can happen to anybody and that there really is hope for recovery."

Bridges' training, as well as her understanding of addiction's complexities, positions her to address both the physical and mental health of her patients. "We hit the trifecta with Jaime because of her unique background and skill sets," says Lainie Fox Ackerman, external affairs and community benefit assistant vice president at

Orlando Health. "Many substance abuse disorders stem from underlying mental and behavioral health issues that haven't been addressed. If a patient is vulnerable with psychological pain, they are more likely to abuse medication. Jaime gets this and works with them."

The Face of the Crisis

The opioid epidemic reaches deep into society, touching everyone from teenagers starting to dabble to older adults in full-blown addiction. "There is no face I haven't seen in the emergency room," says Bridges. "There is one of everybody – housewife, teenager,

Since the program started, opioid outreach coordinator Jaime Bridges has received numerous text messages from patients sharing their progress and thanking her and Orlando Health for the work they have done.

Just wanted to reach out to let you know . . . been clean for two months now and more to come. Thanks for reaching out when you did. It gave me the boost that this is possible.

Thank you so much for all of your help. God Bless you. I would have not been able to remain sober for 11 months without you.

senior citizen, laborer, mom, dad, business professional – people you would never think touch drugs."

The stories are heart-wrenching. The businessman who overdosed behind the wheel of his car, causing a fender bender. The medical clinician who lost her son to an overdose. The tourist who overdosed in a park while on vacation with his family.

Some incidents sear themselves into Bridge's psyche – like the 70-year-old grandmother who overdosed during her shift at her local grocery store. In pain management for years and struggling financially, the woman started buying heroin when the pill mills shut down.

Thank you so much for your help at the hospital ... I appreciate you taking the time to support me through this process. I have 6 months of sobriety and I am excited for life again.

You are AWESOME! . . . she has been sober now for 5 months. Again, her mother and I are convinced you are an Angel.

Just wanted to let you know I am almost 9 months clean. . . . and I also just got a really good job. Just wanted to update you and say thank you so much for getting me on the right track.

"She used a little bit before work; it had fentanyl, and she overdosed behind her cash register," says Bridges. "No one suspected her as someone with OUD, but the paramedics revived her with NARCAN. She was mortified. Initially, she didn't want to tell her family about her drug use, she was so embarrassed."

Embarrassed, but not alone. For many, like that grandmother, addiction begins with a prescription for post-injury pain pills. Shawn Steel, a 40-year-old Orlando builder, was prescribed opiates when he broke his ankle several years ago. When he finished the prescription, he started buying pills on the street, switching to heroin when pills became too expensive. Stints in jail and a fractured life followed.

A spinal infection caused by a dirty needle in his hand sent him to Orlando Health ORMC late last fall, where he met Bridges. "That infection probably saved my life," says Steel, who received antibiotics, MAT and a visit from Bridges. "Jaime came in, got on my level and offered me an opportunity."

Today, Steel is in treatment, considering a new career and working toward a drug-free future. "I wish there was something like this for everyone with drug problems," he says. "You shouldn't have to end up in the hospital to find these opportunities, but I'm lucky I did."

A Connection to Care

The sense of connection Bridges provides personally is as important as the links to outpatient resources she finds. "Addiction gives a sense of disconnect from the rest of society," says Dr. Thundiyil. "Connecting Jaime

to our patients with a 'warm handoff' is extremely instrumental to their success. She sees them at Orlando Health ORMC. When they discharge, she follows up to give them that sense of connectiveness. They see someone who cares."

Bridges sees the connection as something even bigger. "We're connecting people to hope," she says. "Hope for recovery. Hope that someone cares. Hope may be our greatest connection here at Orlando Health."

Community of Comfort

Orlando Health, Bayfront Health St. Petersburg and the surrounding communities encouraged healthcare “heroes” to focus on their own mental health and self-care.

When the pandemic shut down the Central Florida and St. Petersburg areas, residents isolated in their homes. For the 4,500 physicians and 23,000 team members across the Orlando Health system, however, COVID-19 was a call to arms, sending them daily into the hospitals to deal with virus-created crises.

Initially, the pandemic presented physicians with a sense of purpose. In the midst of the pandemic during fiscal year 2021, Orlando Health served nearly 160,000 inpatients and nearly 3.6 million outpatients. As it progressed, however, anxiety replaced the initial adrenaline as nurses, doctors and support staff began to succumb to the stress of overwork and worry.

Like their peers at home, healthcare workers also were juggling families, searching for toilet paper and processing their own personal fears and grief. “You really can’t understand it, unless you were in it,” says Gladys Isiguzo, assistant nurse manager, multisystem ICU/rapid response team, at Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC).

“In the beginning, we didn’t know much about the virus, how contagious or how deadly,” she says. “Suddenly, we had patients sicker than we have ever seen. Would we catch it? It was a heavy mental burden.”

As the world closed down, healthcare workers became more isolated. The halls of Orlando Health’s hospitals, once bustling with people, stood eerily quiet.

Community Camaraderie

While its team members rushed to care for their community, Orlando Health focused on the well-being of its staff. Leadership, sometimes clad in scrubs, provided updates on protective equipment, created negative air pressure rooms, and installed healthcare safety officers. Morale-boosting initiatives served as an antidote to the overwhelming anxiety. Some, like food trucks, Zen rooms and pet therapy, brought a smile to the faces of stressed staff. Self-care opportunities like counseling, chaplain services and weekly vent sessions helped team members stay mentally healthy.

Community members showed their appreciation through acts of love as well. Students welcomed staff to work with chalk drawings on the sidewalk. Bands played outside the hospitals. Children dressed in superhero costumes and made encouraging signs. Community
Continued on page 24

Can’t Thank You Enough

Graphic artist Leo Gomez designed a mural celebrating Bayfront Health St. Petersburg’s healthcare heroes.





"The community at large was so helpful, because they impressed upon us that we were all in it together. And even if they couldn't hand out medications or help with patients directly, they supported us doing that."

"They had a painting mural right next to our HR building. And it gave nurses the opportunity to come and be outside in the sunshine for 10 minutes . . . come down and you can paint a section of the mural yourself. I think that is mental health 101, just to be able to take a break and be outside in the sunshine. That was a huge hit."

"When we walked into work or even through our units, we would see these messages of appreciation or encouragement and gratitude."

"When the sentiment was, 'We're really all in this together. And we appreciate you,' that's not falling on deaf ears by any means. Because it was hard, but it assuaged the burden a bit to know that, okay, everybody is all in this together and appreciative of this common goal of taking care of our humanity, our population, which is all of us."

The mural is a visual thank you note to those who work at Bayfront Health St. Petersburg.

HEALTHCARE HEROES

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partners and businesses donated PPE and supplies. Shuttered restaurants delivered food.

The Art of Gratitude

At Bayfront Health St. Petersburg, local graphic artist Leo Gomez designed a mural on the hospital's campus celebrating healthcare's heroes. Located in a high-traffic area, the mural is a visual thank you note to those who work at Bayfront Health St. Petersburg.

"The artist's girlfriend and his father are both nurses," says Bari Becker, community relations manager, Bayfront Health St. Petersburg. "He was like, 'I couldn't think of anything to say other than, can't thank you enough.' So he stenciled it out and we had everyone come paint it with him – nurses, doctors, staff spouses, kids, everybody!"

Mural painting gave clinicians an opportunity to slip outside into the sunshine for 10 minutes and paint a section of the artwork themselves. "I think that is mental health 101," says Brittany Hamilton, manager, quality process improvement and patient safety, Bayfront Health St. Petersburg. "Just to be able to take a break and be outside. That was a huge hit. Team members were appreciative and overwhelmed with gratitude."

The Road to Recovery

While the pandemic's peak may have passed, COVID's impact continues. Fortunately, so does the community's daily dose of gratitude.

"The administration regularly shares community messages with all of us, whether it's through a card or an email or a post on social media," says Hayley Brown, manager, volunteer services, Orlando Health ORMC. "Everyone at Orlando Health appreciates that the community knows we are still in this. Together."

Appreciation

As a way to thank healthcare workers, children from the community dressed up as superheroes.



"The administration regularly shares community messages with all of us, whether it's through a card or an email or a post on social media. Everyone at Orlando Health appreciates that the community knows we are still in this. Together."

Hayley Brown
Manager | Volunteer Services
Orlando Health ORMC



Stress Relief

Hospital staff take breaks and help paint the Bayfront Health St. Petersburg mural, while others enjoyed pet therapy.



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