

# FACES

of hope



United Health Foundation®

## Why are community health centers so important?

The nation's more than 7,000 Federally Qualified Health Centers are a critical part of our health system. They exist in high-need rural, suburban and urban areas in all 50 states and U.S. territories, and serve as the "family doctor" and a health care safety net for more than 18 million people. They specialize in managing the care of patients whose health status is often compromised by socio-economic challenges.

Preserving the dignity of each individual is fundamental to what community health centers do. Many of these centers' patients are among the nation's 46 million uninsured and an additional 25 million underinsured for whom access to such health care is limited or non-existent. And many more are in need of the services these centers provide.



## What kinds of services do community health centers provide?

Community health centers are a one-stop health care shop where you can find a range of allied health professionals – including doctors, nurses, dentists, social workers, psychologists, nutritionists and physical therapists, among others – providing a wide array of high-quality, health-promoting services, including:

- Physical and behavioral health
- Dental care
- Nutrition and diabetes education
- Smoking cessation programs
- HIV testing, health care, and counseling services
- Community outreach services
- Physical therapy

Community health centers play a critical role in promoting equal access to health care by serving



patients regardless of their insurance status and working to remove financial, geographic, linguistic, cultural and other barriers that often isolate both insured and under-insured or uninsured patients from the care they need and deserve.

These centers provide the same course of treatment and same quality of care to all patients. Clinics accept both government and private insurance plans or offer service on a sliding fee basis, depending on what the patient can afford.



faces of

HOPE

## What is the Faces of Hope campaign?

The United Health Foundation and the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) launched the Faces of Hope campaign to celebrate the people who make community health centers possible and to honor the vital work that they do – as we believe their efforts deserve greater awareness.

However, celebrating the workers and the work they do is just the first step. The campaign recognizes that, despite the tremendous support community health centers enjoy from the federal government, more work must be done to ensure that the essential work of community health centers has the best chance to succeed and be sustained over time. More specifically, we need to ensure:

- Ancillary support is available to community health centers.
- Relationships between community health centers and the private medical community must be strengthened, e.g., referral physicians, specialists and hospitals, and other vital health institutions.
- Community health centers are equipped with the resources for continued expansion of vital community services, like social services and services for the elderly.
- Individuals and corporations are equipped with the resources and information to engage in volunteer and philanthropic efforts.

In order for community health centers to truly turn the promise of universal coverage into the reality of better health care, their federal and local government funding must be supplemented with:

- An expanded, well-trained workforce;
- Support from the professional health community;
- Volunteerism; and
- Philanthropy from individuals and corporations.

## What are the ways to help?

### Government Officials, Legislators, Policymakers

- Recognize and sustain the commendable efforts that have been made on the federal level.
- At the state level, remain sensitive to unmet needs and opportunities.
- Participate in National Health Center Week in your district to help raise awareness of and bolster support for community health centers. Visit [www.healthcenterweek.org](http://www.healthcenterweek.org) for more information.
- Strengthen training opportunities that place health care professionals in underserved areas.

### Philanthropic Donors and Funders (corporations, small businesses, institutions, nonprofits and individuals)

- Support or create “lend an executive” programs for people with business backgrounds, such as in management, accounting, and technology, in addition to those with health care experience to help health centers widen their reach into communities in need, whether it is through an expanded site or a new facility.
- Provide financial support for capital campaigns or for special projects, such as smoking cessation programs, hypertension outreach or electronic medical records infrastructure.



**“It’s a feeling of satisfaction in doing what’s right, a feeling at the end of the day that you’ve really changed a lot of people’s lives.”**

*Aysha Corbett, M.D.  
Medical Director, Congress Heights  
Health Center and Deputy Chief Medical Officer for  
Unity Health Care in Washington, D.C.*

- Provide products (e.g., medical supplies and equipment, office supplies and equipment, pharmaceuticals) to help meet the needs of the medically underserved.
- Encourage your employees to volunteer their time and services at a health center or on marketing campaigns and development drives.
- Join the National Association of Community Health Centers as a member or exhibit and sponsor events at NACHC conferences. Visit [www.nachc.com](http://www.nachc.com).

### Health Care Professionals, Facilities and Students

- Include community health centers in your professional affiliations. Be receptive to reaching out and volunteering to be a source of referral.
- Apply for a community health center loan pay-off or scholarship program through the National Health Services Corps or through state-operated or private sources of such support to receive financial support for schooling in exchange for community health center work. Visit <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov>.

- Consider serving your residency or conducting an internship in a community health center setting. The National Health Services Corps, in cooperation with regional and state partners, offers both students and residents opportunities to practice and learn in medically underserved areas.
- Connect with a National Health Services Corps-identified community health “mentor” on your school’s campus. Faculty members on campuses across the country are already serving as mentors to students who are interested in pursuing a primary care career focused on serving underserved areas.
- Join the Community HealthCorps ([www.communityhealthcorps.org](http://www.communityhealthcorps.org)) and provide a year of AmeriCorps service at a health center, while gaining valuable professional experience and training.

## Academic Health Sciences Centers

- Engage in dialogue with your community health center or Primary Care Association. To find out where your help is needed most, visit [www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://www.findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov).
- Partner with community health centers to conduct research and scholarly opportunities that are relevant to the work of community health centers and the needs of the constituents they serve. Dedicate university resources to community health center research or scholarship opportunities to further aid the growth of community health centers.
- Host a community health center day at your institution to increase student awareness about medically underserved areas and the important role community health centers play.

## Volunteers

- Fifty-one percent of a community health center’s board must be made up of people who use the facility. Consider becoming involved in your local health center. Make a difference and expand the necessary resources for health centers by becoming a resource yourself.
- Volunteer at your local community health center and consider organizing friends and neighbors to do the same. You needn’t be a medical professional to help the cause; volunteering whatever time you can spare at a community health center will enable you to have a direct impact on the health and well-being of your community.
- Become a “health center advocate” by helping to build a strong grassroots network of support.



**“If you can change your community and everybody does that in their community, then the world can get changed.”**

*Jack Taylor  
Owner of Jack Taylor's  
Alexandria Toyota, an example  
of local philanthropy at work.*

## Interested in Getting Involved?

There are many things you can do to ensure that community health centers remain a vital source of high-quality, affordable health care for our underserved communities.

**For more information about how to get involved, please visit the Faces of Hope campaign Web site at**

**[www.facesofhopecampaign.org](http://www.facesofhopecampaign.org)**

In addition to links and resources, there you also will find an electronic copy of the *Faces of Hope: Celebrating Community Health Centers* book, which includes the stories and images of the extraordinary contributions of the people who have made and continue to make community health centers possible.



Research shows that community health centers can and do excel in terms of quality of care and patient satisfaction. For example, studies published by prominent George Washington University (GWU) Medical Center researcher, Sara Rosenbaum, demonstrate that community health centers provide high-quality health care that equals or exceeds that provided in the private sector.\*



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\*National Association of Community Health Centers, Robert Graham Center, Capital Link.

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