



PRIZES FOR PROGRESS

Grand Prize Winner

The Health Wagon

The Health Wagon is a free clinic serving uninsured, under-insured and underserved in Southwest Virginia. The Health Wagon visits eleven sites in its six county service area. The Health Wagon serves the Counties of Dickenson, Buchanan, Russell, Lee, Wise and Scott and the small City of Norton. The Health Wagon has two stationary clinics, one located in Wise, Virginia and one located in Clintwood, Virginia, and the Health Wagon has a mobile health unit that serves as a medical home and travels from town to town, on a rotating basis, throughout the six-county service area.

The mission of the Health Wagon is to provide compassionate, quality health care to the medically underserved people in the Mountains of Appalachia. Our values are inclusiveness, community outreach, collaboration, spirituality and empowerment. The Health Wagon, as the region's only safety net clinic, is proactively responding to the unmet needs of health care and is seeking to develop initiatives that get at the root cause of this. Our patient census has increased because of unemployment, unaffordable deductibles and the high cost of insurance.

The Health Wagon received funding from 2012-2014 for salary and fringe benefits for one full-time nurse practitioner for the expansion of care to the underserved patients in Southwest Virginia. The amount of the grant for the two-year grant period was \$234,142. In addition, the Health Wagon has benefitted directly and indirectly from funding that has been awarded to regional partners in the health care industry such as Pharmacy Connect (Pharmacy Connect of Southwest Virginia) and Taking AIM (Care Scope 360).

The staff and community in the Appalachian Region are so thankful for the Virginia Health Care Foundation and its many contributions to the region. Funding was awarded to the Health Wagon for the salary and benefits for one full-time nurse practitioner and provided a much needed position that **did not exist** at the Health Wagon previously. The Health Wagon **was able to successfully sustain the full-time position** each year after 2014. The additional nurse practitioner has allowed the patient census to increase each year (2013 – 1,734 unduplicated patients, 2014 – 1,716 unduplicated patients, 2015 – 2,016 unduplicated patients, and 2016 – 2,148 unduplicated patients) **an astounding total of 7,614 patients!** These numbers represent actual patients that would not have had access to health care otherwise. Certainly, the health care that was provided was life enhancing and often times lifesaving.

The Health Wagon was able to provide the following services to the increasing patient census with Virginia Health Care Foundation Funding: primary medical care; optometry; cancer early detection, including chest x-rays and pulmonary function testing; acute and chronic disease management; medication assistance program that connects patients with pharmaceutical patient indigent programs; physical assessments; lab and diagnostic services; medical therapy management; nephrology specialty clinics; ostomy clinics; vaccinations; pre and post op surgery clinic; referrals and follow up systems; transportation assistance; wound care clinics; women's health, including pap smears, mammography, cystoscopies and colposcopies; pastoral support; ear, nose and throat clinic; hearing aid assistance; behavioral health clinics; endocrinology clinics; diabetes self-management workshops; chronic disease self-management workshops; screening, diagnosis and self-management of cardiovascular disease; state of the art telemedicine services in partnership with the University of Virginia. The addition of the practitioner allowed the Health Wagon to increase specialty clinics in endocrinology and cardiology. **The nurse practitioner also helped to facilitate the first ever wound care clinic in the nation via telehealth. The nurse practitioner also helped to facilitate the first ever retinopathy exam via telehealth.** All services continue to be sustained.

The nurse practitioner participated in coordinating the largest outreach of its kind in the nation, Remote Area Medical (RAM) Health Expedition, serving over 3,500 patients with free eye, medical and dental care and providing \$1.5 million dollars of health care services to patients in Southwest Virginia. **The RAM event served 15, 588 patients through 2012-2014.** During these years, additional RAM sites were established in Lee County and Smith County. This has turned into an annual event that provides medical, dental, and optometry services free of cost to all patients.

The nurse practitioner also assisted in the coordination of the first drone delivery of medication approved by the FAA. The drone made aviation history and will be inducted into the National Space and Science Museum.

In addition, his funding allowed the Health Wagon to expand partnerships with several local colleges and universities and increased preceptor opportunities for students to get clinical experience at a rural free health care clinic. These partnership have been able to continue and bring additional resources to the organizations.

In addition to the funding for the nurse practitioner for the expansion of care to the underserved patients in Southwest Virginia, the Health Wagon successfully partnered with other local health care providers and systems as well as community based organizations to fully utilize local programs that were funded by the Virginia Health Care Foundation. Currently, the Health Wagon has one full-time Pharmacy Connect Medication Assistance Caseworker (Pharmacy Connect) that looks at patient's records and medication lists to see if free or cheaper medications are available through patient pharmacy assistance programs. The Health Wagon has recently structured the office visit rotation to include Pharmacy Connect at the end of the appointment so that on discharge, each patient has an opportunity to be registered in The Pharmacy Connection (TPC) to have access to free and low-cost medications. In 2016, the Health Wagon had 3,108 medication assistance encounters and provide \$1,082,612 in value of care with Pharmacy Connect. Patients are able to get free medication that is lifesaving.

Another Virginia Health Care Foundation initiative that the Health Wagon is participating in is Taking AIM or Care Scope 360. The Health Wagon is not funded for this partnership and is providing in-kind support entirely. The role of the Health Wagon for Taking AIM is to be the safety net or the free clinic available to patients over utilizing the emergency departments or who are self-pay visiting local hospitals. This program currently has over 170 patients enrolled. For a patient to enroll, he or she must enter an emergency department with Wellmont Health System or Mountain States Health Alliance and not have a primary care physician and/or be a self-pay patient. The Health Wagon's in-kind support includes: primary care physicians, nurses, administrative staff, pharmaceuticals, labs, diagnostic testing and follow-up appointments. This program is saving the two primary health systems in the area financial savings by essentially taking on the financial responsibility that the hospital would incur if this program did not exist. The Health Wagon will continue to sustain follow-up with the patients from Taking AIM.