



Above: Nora Miller, AMM's Garden & Wellness Coordinator

ALLIANCE MEDICAL MINISTRY

Working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic

| BY MELANIE RANKIN |

Photography provided by Alliance Medical Ministry

In the late 1990s, First United Methodist Church of Cary member Dr. Charlie Mann attended a training conference where he learned about a unique health clinic that served low-income adults. Coming back to Cary, he felt a tug, which he recognized as God calling him to serve and found a clinic that could truly treat “the whole person.” In 2003, Dr. Mann joined other church members to do just that. Together, they founded a clinic that would provide holistic care—combining

primary healthcare, specialty medical services, lab work, pastoral care and counseling, health education, and wellness programs—for the most vulnerable members of their community. They made sure that this clinic, Alliance Medical Ministry (AMM), was located in a zip code that would be accessible for those most in need. The AMM clinic is located near downtown Raleigh on New Bern Avenue and serves 2,000 working, uninsured adults per year. >

“We wrap around the entire patient. We try to figure out what it is that’s going on in their life that might make it difficult for them to treat their chronic disease and what we can do to make it easier.”

- Dr. Sheryl Joyner, Senior Physician and WMPC member

At the time of AMM’s founding, the largest healthcare gap in our community was low-income working adults--those who did not qualify for government support but could not afford private health insurance. Eighteen years later, that healthcare gap continues to exist, as more than 115,000 Wake County residents had no health insurance at the end of 2020.

AMM’s approach to health is straight forward – treat the whole person. Health is a huge driver in helping a person reach his or her potential. AMM recognizes the essential connection between body, mind, and spirit and wants to help each patient grow stronger and healthier in all ways. AMM Senior Physician and member of White Memorial Presbyterian Church, Dr. Sheryl Joyner explains the holistic approach, “We wrap around the entire patient. We try to figure out what it is that’s going on in their life that might make it difficult for them to treat their chronic disease and what we can do to make it easier.” AMM’s holistic approach integrates medical care, social work, behavioral healthcare, nutrition and exercise.

The majority of AMM patients live with two or more chronic diseases and fall into at-risk groups for COVID-19. Due to the ongoing pandemic, AMM has had to quickly pivot in how it delivers all its services. AMM became the second non-profit health clinic in North Carolina to offer telehealth services. Since implementing telehealth, primary care appointments have increased by 15% and mental health appointments by 35%, while the number of no-show appointments has been reduced by 60%. AMM also opened a medication drive-thru during the pandemic so patients could continue to receive life-saving medications, such as insulin, safely. This past year, AMM dispensed nearly \$4.35 million in medication at no cost to their patients. >



Above top: AMM nurse practitioner, Josh McConaghay, is one of many bilingual clinic staff. More than 55% of AMM clinic staff are Spanish- speaking, which helps build trusting relationships with patients and makes the healthcare more accessible.

Above bottom: Telehealth is a HIPPA compliant virtual appointment and allows Senior Physician, Dr. Sheryl Joyner, to see a patient and their medical records at the same time.

AMM'S APPROACH TO HEALTH IS STRAIGHT FORWARD – TREAT THE WHOLE PERSON.



Above: AMM's on-site garden provides 2,000 pounds of fresh produce distributed to patients and used in Cooking Matters classes.

AMM's patients are low-income, uninsured and are among those most susceptible to the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has highlighted existing disparities in health care: people of color are four times more likely to be hospitalized and three times more likely to die from COVID-19. Fifty-five percent of AMM patients are Hispanic and 27% are Black.

In early 2020, AMM was preparing to launch a fundraising campaign to expand capacity and meet existing demand. Prior to the pandemic, AMM had a waiting list of more than 400 people. Now, the need is greater than ever, and AMM has

recently relaunched the Health & Hope Now campaign. The campaign will raise \$1.3 million and allow AMM to hire a full-time medical provider, medical support staff, and a full-time bilingual mental health provider and expand overall capacity by 24.5% and add 450 new patients over the next three years.

“The Health & Hope Now Campaign is a clear healthcare solution during a major health crisis,” said AMM executive director Pete Tannenbaum. “We must respond to this call to improve the health and the lives of people who live and work right here in our community.” ■

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT
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