

# DHC Interviews

## Louisville's Family Community Clinic Remains Invaluable for Uninsured Residents

by Aaron Burch

Nestled in Louisville's historic Butchertown is a special facility which has made a difference for thousands of uninsured residents.

The Family Community Clinic (FCC), located at 1420 E. Washington Street, provides a variety of essential services including primary care, dental care, and psychiatry for Louisville residents without insurance coverage. Persons of all backgrounds visit the busy clinic, but most patients (approximately 85%) are Hispanic.



Since the clinic first opened its doors in 2011, more than 12,000 people have used its free and vital services. Before the pandemic, the facility was seeing nearly 500 walk-in patients per month. Following a 3-month closure to assess patient safety, the clinic reopened in July 2020 with updated precautions.

"Because of Covid, we operate only by appointment now, rather than walk-in visits. That's a big difference from how it used to be," said FCC Executive Director Ellen Wells who came aboard in late 2019. She's barely known of a time in her health care leadership career with any greater challenge than managing the breadth of a pandemic. However, Wells adopted to the changes through steady leadership.

"Patient safety and disease control were our first priorities. We asked patients wait in their cars until the appointment was ready to limit exposure. We used telehealth procedures for the unvaccinated. Our numbers dropped from 500 visits per month to 200 per month, but due to the safety precautions, that's not surprising."



Wells is supported by a fantastic group of physicians and volunteers including DHC President Dr. Muhammad Babar, DHC Vice-President Dr. Waqar Saleem, and many others. One of the FCC's first and finest supporters is Dr. Manuel Grimaldi, an oncologist who works at the clinic two days per week and serves on the board of directors.

"The culture has changed around here since Covid, but I don't think people are unhappy. We ask people to wear a mask, and we ask those with a cold or flu not to come," Dr. Grimaldi explained. "We're doing more work with telehealth and transcription of patient records, but we have the resources to see these patients properly."

FCC has become a vital hub for patient care as well as young physician/nurse development. Many young adults interested in medicine start as scribes or interpreters with the clinic, including several DHC volunteers. "I always say, 'The best way for a medical student to know what is not normal for a patient is to see a lot of normal,'" Dr. Grimaldi said. "Coming here is a great opportunity to learn. You realize the beauty of caring for patients."

DHC President Dr. Muhammad Babar has been engaged with FCC since day one, furthering the mission as well. He currently serves on the Family Community Clinic's Board of Directors. Because of the clinic's incredible services, many charitable health-based organizations partner with the FCC to increase their patient outreach. Have A Heart, Surgery on Sunday, the KY Lions Eye Foundation, Norton's Mobile Cancer Screening Van and more all make regular visits to the clinic. Because the facility attracts so many individuals who otherwise wouldn't receive care, it's important that patients have a full range of tests and services made available to them.

Whatever the patient needs, FCC staff works to meet them where they are. For example, when Afghan refugees arrived in Louisville in 2021, it was Family Community Clinic volunteers and physicians who worked side by side with Doctors for Healthy Communities to make sure the refugees received physicals and proper medical care. Other times, meeting the patient may mean a coordination between multiple facilities.

"We had a patient come in who needed dental care, a full extraction. An FCC physician made all the calls to make sure she got the care she needed. The lower extraction was done here on site, and the upper extraction was done at an outside office. Then, the patient received dentures from the UofL School of Dentistry. She came back after all that work was done so happy. She was so proud of her beautiful smile." If the FCC can't treat the issue, staff will work with the patient to acquire financial aid so screenings and treatments can be acquired elsewhere.



Those partnerships and good will of like-minded organizations that make this collaboration and really the facility as a whole possible. Much of the office furniture and dental equipment was donated, other important medical pieces were supplied by a grant. Pharmacy students from Sullivan University visit the clinic four days per week to help fill

patient medications and keep inventory up to date. Physicians and nurses volunteer their time. It's a group effort to serve the underserved.

"You have to council people with charity," Dr. Grimaldi said. "You have to show compassion, and others will see that you care. A good clinic is like a restaurant. If you love it, you want to tell everyone about your experience. The same goes for me. Because I believe in the mission, I'm dying to tell everyone about what we do. I have many conversations with potential patients that start with, 'You should have insurance. But, since you don't, I know a place that is going to treat you well.' People need help, and its our duty to see that they get it."

The FCC will be by appointment only for the future, just like other primary care practices. "We are well organized and we have great support, so I think we'll see more patients, volunteer providers and support professionals in the near future," said Ellen Wells.

Visit [famcomclinic.org](http://famcomclinic.org) to learn how you can get involved. This is a very rewarding, heartwarming organization to support.

"Most of the fruits of what we do, we'll never see. It doesn't matter," said Dr. Grimaldi. "The important thing to do is plant seeds, because this is going to grow."



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