

Free Health Care for the Needy: A Model Deserving of Support

Editor's Pick. An interview by the Libertas Institute.

Libertas Institute: Please tell us who you are and what you do.

DeAnne Staheli: My name is DeAnne Staheli and I'm the director of the Doctors' Volunteer Clinic of St. George.

LI: How did your clinic get started?

DS: In 1999, Dr. Doxey was president of the local medical society and they were trying to think of something they could do to give back to the community. They decided to start a free clinic, which took about a year of preparation work, meeting with agencies in the area.

The local homeless shelter volunteered their site, which was a tiny house with five rooms. They gave us one room, the size of a bedroom. We turned the closet into a medication closet, put a sink and shelves in. Somebody donated \$3,000 to start, and that was our budget for the first year.

In only three months, we were overwhelming them and needed to find somewhere else to operate. We only had two doctors volunteering, and nobody to help with mental health or dental. We found volunteer counselors from the community to help start our mental clinic, and found dentists that were willing to take patients in their offices.

That was for the first couple years. We put an ad in the paper to see if anybody wanted to donate land or a building so we could move, and found somebody who donated land to us. The local homebuilders association volunteered to build it, and we were able to pay them about \$80,000 for all of that work. That was in 2003, and the building was about 3,000 square feet. It had three exam rooms, one counseling room, and one dental chair.

That was okay until about 2010, when we were having mental health done in the dental chair, or doing counseling in the storage closet... we were bursting by the seams by then. So we planned a new building, which the home builders agreed to do again. The economy had crashed and this is a construction community, so they were the hardest hit. These people, a lot of them didn't have any work. But they were over here volunteering.

These guys added another 3,000 square feet and remodeled the interior of the existing building, and now we have exam rooms, a pharmacy, surgical, dental, medical health, office space... it was going to cost \$250,000 and they charged us a final bill of \$50,000. It was amazing!

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