Dear LCHC Partners,

“Love never fails.” Those are the beautifully bold words penned by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Our ministry’s motto, “Loving God, Loving People,” echoes the same. They are great words that guide us.

Lawndale Christian Health Center is a place filled with bright, capable people who work very hard to achieve excellence in providing health services for our community. Our 500 staff members each possess a unique set of skills, ranging from physician, dentist, architect, data analyst, to Zumba instructor. We depend on each person’s talents every day to serve our 60,000 patients.

But if you engaged our staff members in conversation to learn what they believe is most important about their work, you may not immediately hear about their unique professional skills. Instead their words will likely connect back to our motto, “Loving God, Loving People.” We know that for our work to have a meaningful impact it must be motivated by the love that Paul describes and by the love that Jesus demonstrated for us. Loving our patients and loving our community allows our work to succeed and to be authentic.

In this newsletter, you will read articles about relationships and collaborations that are guided by the word love. In each of these articles you will sense the deep motivations that come from Paul’s encouragement that “Love never fails.” Love engages our hearts and minds and that is how we can truly impact our patients and our community.

We appreciate your desire to participate in our efforts. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Thank you,

Bruce Miller
CEO, Lawndale Christian Health Center
Two decades ago, Paula was a young mother desperate to find a doctor to help her care for her new daughter. Viviana was just 2 months old and suffering from severe allergic reactions. Without insurance, Paula and Viviana had been turned away from other healthcare providers. Then Paula’s sister-in-law introduced her to Lawndale Christian Health Center.

“I had to take the bus all the way from Midway, but it was worth it. Even when I did not have money to pay, I was never turned away.” Paula fondly reminisces when LCHC was just the one clinic on Ogden: “Sometimes we had to wait to be seen, but no one ever complained. We knew the doctors were great and took care of us with their heart. The staff was always so attentive and caring – even giving us direct pager numbers if Viviana was having any problems.”

With her medical complications, Paula and Viviana recall times when they would need emergency appointments, “Thankfully, we would always get on the schedule because they cared about her health.”

Viviana’s pediatrician was Dr. Jerry Umanos, with whom the family built a special bond immediately. “Dr. Umanos was more than just a doctor, he was like our family,” they recall. When Dr. Umanos began his work in Afghanistan, Viviana became a patient of Dr. Olivia Pan at LCHC’s Homan Square clinic. Nearly twenty years later, the family still experiences the same level of care and commitment from the LCHC staff. Sorrowfully, Paula recalls that when they heard of Dr. Umanos passing in 2014, they were in disbelief. “Dr. Umanos is no longer with us, but Dr. Pan is just as wonderful as Dr. Umanos. She cares just as much as he did about our health.”
“If we want to really help people get healthy, we’ve got to do something about what people eat,” says Dr. Wayne Detmer, Chief Clinical Officer of Operations for LCHC. Dr. Detmer’s passion for creating a healthier community has been the motivation behind LCHC’s efforts to create ‘The Farm on Ogden’ in North Lawndale. This new multi-million dollar construction project creates an innovative greenhouse, fish farm, grocery store and job training program at the main campus of LCHC.

Efforts to raise the funds to create the facility are underway, with The Farm on Ogden slated to open in late 2016. In the shadows of the Pink Line El track running through Lawndale, LCHC and the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG) are collaborating to create a space dedicated to transforming the long-term health of the community. CBG’s Windy City Harvest program will provide their expertise in sustainable urban farming. The Farm on Ogden will host an ‘aquaponics’ system – a cutting-edge urban farming technique that grows both fish and plants in a sustainable ecosystem.

Soon, the Farm on Ogden will grow over 30,000 pounds of produce and 14,000 pounds of tilapia annually. Affordable produce will be sold to the community at the corner store – creating much needed access to healthier food options. ‘Prescriptions’ from LCHC providers and partnership with the WIC program will provide free or discounted produce to those who qualify. Local high school students will be enrolled year-round in a violence-prevention jobs program.

Adults interested in learning the field of urban farming, including residents of Lawndale’s Hope House, can complete an education and job training program to improve employment prospects in the growing field of sustainable agriculture.

As Dr. Detmer puts it, “When you drive down Ogden Avenue, day or night, you’re going to see fish swimming around and a green house – in North Lawndale. We’re creating a mini-ecosystem and bringing a sense of hope and healthy living – that is part of what creates community health.”
The Blessing is Mutual

“It seems like patients see the most dramatic changes in their chronic health conditions when we at Lawndale are working well as a team - when the patient is an active participant in the care team,” Erin Mann says. LaDonna Johnson and Ms. Mann are one LCHC provider-patient team that have been working together to improve health. LaDonna had been suffering from high blood pressure for many years. She’d been to several doctors, but could not get her blood pressure under control. Then she came to LCHC.

LaDonna notes, “Ms. Mann immediately set in motion a game plan to get my blood pressure down from the first time we met. I was finally given the right medicine combination to get it under control. There has been such a dramatic change in my health.” It’s clear that the key to their success is a depth of mutual care and trust. “It’s a privilege to be a part of a positive change in someone’s health,” Erin says. “LaDonna is wonderful, and has every reason to feel proud of herself. Through our working together she has also blessed me – she even knitted a blanket, hat, and clothes for my new baby!”

“Ms. Mann is caring and goes way out of her way to make sure your needs are met. She makes you feel that getting you healthy is her number one priority. I’ve had an awesome experience with all the LCHC staff,” LaDonna shares. Both LaDonna and Erin Mann know it takes the entire team at LCHC to provide whole-person care. “One day I had an appointment and she noticed that I was not my talkative self, and asked what was wrong. I was so moved by her compassion that I began to tell her about a problem that I was having trouble dealing with.” Erin asked LaDonna if she would be interested in speaking with one of LCHC’s onsite psychologists for some additional support. LaDonna agreed. “Before I left she had set up an appointment. It’s wonderful to have a diverse, Christian-based clinic that provides such quality care in my neighborhood.”
A Step in Faith

Inspired by faith and family, Karen Scurry felt a call to medicine and service at just 11 years old. Through chance meetings with a former coworker, Karen heard about the Physician Assistant program at Cook County Hospital – Malcolm X College. “I wanted to diagnose and treat patients. I had always planned on medical school, but the Lord had plans for me. At Cook County Hospital you see things no one else sees. I was surprised by the autonomy and intensity of the program and the work,” she recalls.

“I did a rotation at Cook County Jail, and I began to pray about working there after I graduated.” With the support of her family, Karen began to serve as a medical provider to the inmates. “On my first day people found out I was a Christian. They began to throw cash around, making bets on how fast I would lose my faith. ‘You’ll change,’ they said.” Karen faithfully served for 9 years before she felt it was time to move on. “I was ready to start a family. The gang fights, the smell of cocaine - I didn’t want to take an unborn baby into that. But I did change there - I became stronger in the Lord.”

Karen Scurry now shares her deep faith and gentle spirit with LCHC. “Coming to work here was a step in faith. During a sermon on the passage where Jesus tells the disciples to cast out their nets, I felt the spirit pulling me to Lawndale. While shadowing another provider, I stopped a moment to pray about the decision. When I opened my eyes, the painting in front of me was of the very same story – the disciples casting out their nets. ‘I get it, Lord. I’m coming,’ I prayed.”

“Whereas at the jail I had people betting against me, here I have coworkers and patients praying over me. We become so connected to our patients. On days off, I’m still calling. Sometimes I’ll mail job announcements to patients looking for a job.” She admits that during her 8 years at LCHC, at times her dedication can be difficult. With tears in her eyes, she concludes, “When we think about the joy that Christ had in what he gave for us, what we do is not that hard.”