Clinic for Mentally Ill Celebrates 10 Years of Service

Published February 2006

When Connie Wilson, EdD, started a clinic for homeless, mentally ill people, she had no idea she would be celebrating its 10-year anniversary.

"Nurse-managed psychiatric clinics don't often have a long lifespan," says Dr. Wilson, a 30-year professor in the College of Nursing. "Our patients are not covered by Medicaid, and we don't charge for our services. All our funding is through grants and donations.

"But we're more successful than we ever anticipated, and I'm very proud we're celebrating 10 years of service."

Dr. Wilson started the clinic, called the Health Resource Center of Cincinnati (HRC) and located in the FreeStore Foodbank, to help homeless, mentally ill people who were repeatedly being treated in the psychiatric unit at University Hospital. She wanted to create a place for them to seek multidisciplinary, comprehensive treatment and break the cycle of repeated visits to the hospital.

The clinic celebrated its 10th anniversary on Jan. 21 with a celebration that featured a video message from Cincinnati mayor Mark Mallory, musical entertainment, food and a silent auction.

"Our budget is $450,000 a year and our income is only $200,000," says Dr. Wilson. "We rely heavily on grants and donations. Our anniversary celebration helped us raise more than $7,000 so far and allowed us to thank those who support us."

Dr. Wilson took a year off from teaching in 1995 to start the HRC, with support from the College of Nursing and the help of a graduate student. Physicians, psychiatrists and graduate students in multiple disciplines, including nursing, medicine, social work and counseling, provide diagnostic assessments, counseling, psychotherapy and medication management.

The HRC, which is certified by the Ohio Department of Mental Health, was instrumental in developing and launching two additional agencies that serve the indigent and homeless of Cincinnati--Anthony House and the Center for Respite Care.

Anthony House, currently run by Lighthouse Youth Services, is a safe haven for street youth. The Center for Respite Care, a 24-hour medical facility located at the Center for Chemical Addiction Treatment, also serves mentally ill homeless people.

"It's amazing that the clinic has come so far in the last 10 years," says Andrea Lindell, DNSc, dean of the College of Nursing, "but Connie is passionate about the HRC and she's an exceptional leader."