



EVOLUTION OF A COMMUNITY HEALTH MINISTRY

Community Health Ministry of the Diocese of Memphis began in 1994 as a collaborative effort between two Catholic hospitals—St. Francis Hospital and St. Joseph Hospital—and Catholic Charities. Its mission is to assist parishes and the larger community through a health and wellness ministry that engages all people in the healing ministry of Christ. But in 1994 St. Francis Hospital was sold to Tenet Health Care System, a for-profit system, and last year St. Joseph Hospital was sold to Baptist Healthcare System. That left St. Peter Villa, a not-for-profit, 180-bed skilled- and intermediate-care facility operated by Associated Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Memphis, as the sole Catholic healthcare provider in the Memphis community.

In July 1998 the diocese consolidated all its health ministry programs under the auspices of St. Peter Villa. The goal of the reorganized program, still called Community Health Ministry, is to strengthen the diocese's health ministry programs in collaboration with a Catholic healthcare agency. This structure allows St. Peter Villa to enlarge its outreach to both the Catholic community and the larger community to provide healthcare support and health ministry. Our responsibility is to ensure that St. Peter Villa, our parishes, and the Catholic community work together to promote holistic care and make healthcare as

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human and charitable as possible.

Since its inception, Community Health Ministry has been a beneficial service for parish families, both those who give their services to others and those who receive services. From within the parish, it calls forth the gifts and talents of a significant number of men and women who work in healthcare. These healthcare professionals and the parishes' lay ministers work together to meet the needs of parishioners in a comprehensive way. This year the Community Health Ministry program not only served the Catholic community, but expanded its outreach to 22 congregations of different faiths.

VOLUNTEERS ARE KEY

More than 700 healthcare professionals and lay ministers volunteer their time and expertise to Community Health Ministry. They provide much-needed services and help fill in the gaps in the traditional healthcare delivery system. Each faith community they serve is unique, and their ministry is tailored to the individual community's needs and resources.

Health Ministry volunteers wear many hats. Although most parishes focus on healthcare programs, some needed services are only indirectly related to health. Volunteers may help with making churches accessible to handicapped people, filling out medical forms, sending cards, collecting clothes, or providing transportation and respite care. One parish has established a durable equipment lending closet, which is open to the whole community. Other parishes have created lending libraries and spiritual reading groups to aid isolated or lonely people.

A TEAM APPROACH

Most parishes use a team approach to make the best use of their volunteers. Each parish has a



Ms. Abuelouf is the developer and coordinator of Community Health Ministry, St. Peter Villa, Memphis.



coordinator and several teams that respond to various parish needs. This arrangement allows volunteers to put in small amounts of time in their areas of particular interest. The coordinator is available in the parish office once a week to answer health-related questions and follow up on cases.

Some parishes "twin" with another. The Church of the Holy Spirit, for example, hired a registered nurse to work 10 hours a week in the inner-city parish of Holy Names Church, and volunteers from Holy Spirit work in various ministries for Holy Names.


Through a grant from the Assisi Foundation of Memphis, trained health ministry consultants serve as mentors to get the program started in churches. Two consultants are working with Sudanese and Somali communities in the Memphis area to determine their needs and begin a health ministry. To maximize community resources and avoid duplication of services, we also collaborate with agencies in the community. For two years Community Health Ministry has worked with the University of Memphis's Loewenberg School of Nursing and St. Joseph Hospital School of Nursing, whose students participate in our health ministry as part of their clinical training.

SERVING ALL

Community Health Ministry serves people of all ages. Its Catholic in Action intergenerational program, implemented three years ago by Holy

Rosary Parish Health and Social Ministry, has won the Tennessee Health Care Association's Better Life Award. Through this program, which has expanded to three middle schools and three nursing homes, including St. Peter Villa, sixth-graders visit nursing home residents once a week throughout the school year. Many of the children have never interacted with adults of this age, and an orientation program at the beginning of the school year helps allay their anxieties. They gain an understanding of the aging process and an appreciation of elderly people; the nursing-home residents show increased activity and responsiveness. Also at St. Peter Villa, volunteers have created the Caring Friends program, in which people give their time to share companionship and warmth with the residents.

The Catholic Identity Committee at St. Peter Villa, composed of clergy and parishioners from the diocese parishes, develops ways to maintain Catholic identity and to involve the parishes in the Villa's mission. Their activities have included organizing caroling at Christmas and distributing Christmas cards and small presents. Community Health Ministry provides the essential links that help the faith community and healthcare services to pool their resources effectively, in order to build a healthy community and continue Christ's healing mission. □

 For more information, contact Alma Abuelouf at 901-725-3578.

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A HEALTH MINISTRY IN NORTH DAKOTA

The St. Alexis Health Ministry Program, in Bismarck, ND, is a collaborative project among local churches, St. Alexis Medical Center, and the University of Mary. The program is designed to serve as a resource to local parishes that wish to establish volunteer health ministries.


The program, which is staffed by two part-time registered nurses, helps churches recruit and train volunteers. Registered nurses receive training in parish nursing and serve as health educators, personal health counselors, and facilitators of the relationship between faith and health. They can evaluate an individual's situation and make appropri-

ate referrals for healthcare services or other needs, such as transportation or help with meals.

The parish nurses also coordinate the non-health-related services of church volunteers, such as yard work, taking someone to church, or visiting a lonely parishioner. All volunteers are trained to provide a ministry to others. Plans are underway to provide training in the BeFriends Ministry, an ecumenical program for lay pastoral care developed at the University of St. Thomas.

Each church determines its own needs and develops an appropriate program. St. Alexis provides program per-

sonnel, a resource library, and communications and marketing support. The program coordinator, Shelly Ryberg, RN, helps churches develop their programs, serves as a preceptor for nursing students from the University of Mary who participate in the program, and assists with the recruitment and training of volunteers. Participating churches are asked to pay a \$500 fee; the medical center, in turn, pays for the parish nurse training and/or BeFriends ministry training for two volunteers.

 For more information on the Health Ministry Program, call Shelly Ryberg at 701-221-8089.