



HEALTH CARE for ALL NORTH CAROLINA

Health Care for All NC

www.healthcareforallnc.org

Welcome to the Spring 2014 issue of your HCfA-NC Newsletter

Inside this newsletter you will learn about the recent *Resolution to Expand Medicaid* and understand *North Carolina's Medicaid Challenge*. You will also learn about The effect of *Market Driven Health Care* on NC health care, and a reflection of Moral Mondays in an article called *Remembering Moral Monday*.

We want to receive your ideas and suggestions about your newsletter and ways to bring a better health care system to NC. What does health care mean to you? Send suggestions/thoughts to: mandie.j.carlson@gmail.com

Sincerely,
Your Editorial Staff,
Mandie Carlson & Mysha Sissine

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Market Driven Health Care

By Will Cox

Market-driven healthcare results in huge profits for some, but the ravenous pursuit of money can be catastrophic for healthcare workers and patients. This hit home for me in June 2012 as I braced myself for disaster and made my way down the halls of the medical center where I work in Winston-Salem. As co-workers passed in the hallway, none of us could conceal our fear and anxiety. The fortunate gathered together to speculate on which department would be hit next, in the largest of recent layoffs.

Employees in environmental services, patient transport, and food service already had their pay reduced to near poverty wages when their jobs were contracted out to a for-profit staffing corporation. Simultaneously, the parent company of the medical center was engaged in a multi-million dollar regional expansion campaign, in order to compete for "higher payer markets".

These Wall Street tactics aren't unique to our region as explained in a recent *Nation* article by Seattle Congressman Jim McDermott, a long-time single payer advocate. McDermott warns of the consolidation of hospitals, physicians, and insurance companies into a medical industrial complex. Now, the Affordable Care Act has become the most recent excuse for wield-

ing this tremendous power and leverage, but access to healthcare, patient safety and working conditions continue to suffer.

The silver lining is that business-model health care cannot completely eliminate caregivers from the health care equation. Although labor costs are tabulated and productivity is charted, this will not change the fact that the act of caring for another person is infused with meaning. These relationships are more than a means to a monetary transaction. It is this shared humanity that gives our work meaning and inspires healthcare workers to remain vigilant protectors of their patients and each other.

This is why Christine Nelson, a registered nurse at the Medical University of South Carolina, feels that we can not provide safe, quality health care without securing the rights of healthcare workers. The 19-year healthcare veteran spoke out against racial discrimination, understaffing, HIPAA violations by supervisors and ongoing mistreatment of low wage workers at the hospital. For speaking out and organizing around these issues in the workplace, Nelson was fired from her job in February.

A determined Nelson explains, "We ask our patients to take an active role in their health. We need to take an active role in our workplace and protect ourselves. This protects our pa-

tients." Various organizations, including the Southern Workers' Assembly and the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment (CAFE) are rallying to her defense. Nelson and other Charleston activists marched alongside tens of thousands of protesters, including Health Care for All NC, at the Historic Thousands on Jones Street demonstration (HKonJ) in Raleigh. This was not a demonstration of business-model politics, but it may be a powerful model for moving forward with what we have. As she reflected on health care organizing and the march in Raleigh, Nelson summed it up well. "We are all caregivers. We have to be a voice for each other."

People can find about the campaign to end worker activist retaliation and rehire Christine Nelson at MUSC at <http://southernworker.org>

Resolution to Expand Medicaid

By Bill Murray, Faith Based Coordinator

One step in the right direction of universal health care and a single payer system is for our state legislature to initiate the provisions of the Affordable Care Act to Expand Medicaid. This would enable NC to accept millions of dollars from the Federal Government to pay doctors, nurses, aides, clerks, and others to provide health care for up to 500,000 of our poorest NC citizens.

We have sponsored a Resolution to Expand Medicaid which can be seen on our web site at

<http://tinyurl.com/HcFA-Faith-MCD>

We are eager to have a resolution passed by cities, counties, churches and any other willing organization, such as a group at a retirement center I am working with. So far, some version of this resolution has been initiated by our members and passed by the following organizations:

- Town of Chapel Hill
- NC Council of Churches
- United Church of Chapel Hill's Justice Board
- Church of the Reconciliation in Chapel Hill
- Covenant Presbyterian Church in Durham

Imagine that you contact a group and they pass a resolution. Then emails and telephone calls go out from your group members to their friends and loved ones to encourage them to have their organizations pass a similar Resolution.

Can you imagine this catching on via social media into a wildfire of organizations passing resolutions and publicizing this issue? People would be educated about the shame of our NC legislature turning down federal money, jobs, and health care for ideological reasons. Eventually, when enough wildfires are burning and enough people are angry about this shame, the NC legislature will move to join the other Republican states that are expanding Medicaid.

Can you help us find other organizations to pass a resolution? They can customize it to fit their group and needs. For example, United Church of Chapel Hill (UCC) added in several official statements made by the UCC denomination's top group in favor of universal, accessible



Christine Nelson at the Moral Monday March

(cont.) health care. We wish to assist faith-based organizations and others to educate their members on the issue of Medicaid Expansion and to generate positive publicity by passing their own version of this Resolution urging NC to expand Medicaid. We ask that you:

- Read and forward the above link to your friends
- Share with religious and other organizations to discuss, edit, and pass
- Publicize those actions
- Encourage the members of your organization to send out its version of the Resolution to their friends and relatives, suggesting they get their NC organizations to pass a similar Resolution and publicize that.
- Send questions to Bill Murray, 919-240-7924, or email him at billmurray2929@gmail.com. Let him know if you would like a speaker for your group.

Let us know when you pass a Resolution so that we may add your organization to the list on our web site. We anticipate a long list! Send the information to Gary Greenberg at gngreenberg@gmail.com.

HCFA-NC Mission

To work toward a publicly financed, sustainable, quality health care system that is open to all people in North Carolina.

Remembering Moral Monday

By Gary Greenberg

A month before the NC NAACP's February 8 "Moral March" several clinicians assembled for a promise.

We committed to show the greater community that White-Coat professionals cared about civic affairs, and that when public policy threatened our patients, we'd show up and speak out. Although many of us had appeared at prior Moral Monday demonstrations (some of us even got arrested), the mid-winter event would require more logistics, more publicity and more planning.

Utilizing dozens of emails, two in-person Sunday meetings and a few new Facebook pages, word spread about the assembly in Raleigh as a chance to show dissatisfaction with the General Assembly's actions, and that our objections were rooted in professionalism and our role in the caring arts.

On site, our white-coated brigade numbered 100 at all stages of seniority, standing among the largest Civil Justice crowd in decades with more than 80,000 people. In reaching the public's attention, it felt like a success, though the actual reversal of these legislative actions is a long way and much effort away.

Without intent, meetings were hosted by Perri Morgan, PA-C. Her family of arrestees includes Tim Tyson, Ph.D., visiting professor of American Christianity and Southern culture and author of "Blood Done Sign My Name." Dr. Tyson was an invited platform speaker in February. His presentation was eloquent and powerful and he's allowed us to distribute the transcript:

Stand Together and Pray with Your Feet

Tim Tyson, Raleigh, North Carolina, February 5, 2014

//Rabbi Abraham Heschel, the great Jewish theologian who marched with Dr. King, said that sometimes we need to pray with our feet. That's why I am here today, to pray with my feet, but first to talk about where we came from and where we are going.

//Eight years ago, we started this movement because we saw that the government of North Carolina was leaving its people behind. But like the prophet Ezekiel, Rev. Dr. William Barber had a vision that the valley of the dry bones could raise up a mighty army of love. We learned that when we stand together, we can bring a bright new day.

//We stood together for same day onsite voter registration, early voting and the Racial Justice Act, and won. When Latino, black and white workers at Smithfield struck for decent working conditions, we stood together with workers and they won.

//When the far-right tried to divide our coalition along racial lines by pushing through an Amendment banning gay marriage, we stood together as never before and, though we lost the vote, we made history.

//When they came after the teachers, we stood together for strong public schools.

//When they tried to keep students from voting, we stood together behind our young people.

//When they denied the rights of immigrant youth to an education, we stood together with our Latino neighbors.

//When they went after the rights of women to control their own bodies, and the governor brought them cookies of contempt, we stood together for women's rights.

//Last year we showed up Monday after Monday, rain or shine -- natives and immigrants, business leaders and workers, doctors and the uninsured, gay and straight, students and retirees. Today we are joined by many thousands more. Never before has the South seen a coalition like this one, and we will win.

//We stand together because we have work to do.

//We stand shoulder to shoulder with those left behind by Governor McCrory and his "super-majority" who have refused federal money to extend Medicaid to half a million human beings and to extend unemployment benefits, causing innocent children and our state's economy to suffer.

//We stand together for greater access to the ballot, but the "super-majority" has passed an old-fashioned Southern voting law with dozens of measures intended to create long lines and low turnout. They may have a "super-majority" in there but they know they full well they don't have one out here.

//We stand together, a quilt of many colors, faiths, and creeds, in witness against this war on the most vulnerable. In the spirit of our ancestors and in the spirit of our youth, we call on all people of good will to resist these attacks on those Jesus called "the least of these." We are not alone. We stand together. We will pray with our feet, Lord. Now is the time. Here is the place. We are the people. And we will be heard.

Disclaimer: any religious references do not represent the position of HCFA NC or PNHP

North Carolina's Medicaid Challenge

By Robin Lane, Treasurer

Not too long ago it seemed as if the motto of the times was "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Today it seems that describing NC's Medicaid program as being "broke" is the only excuse Raleigh legislators can find to justify an extensive overhaul of this critical safety net program for the poor. So, despite the fact that the program's Community Care Network has received national recognition for excellence, a fix is underway.

Over the past few weeks, about a year after the infamous "listening tour" of State Secretary of Human Services Dr. Aldona Wos and company, we learned what will be in the "fix". This took place when the plan was unveiled by the Health Reform Advisory Group, headed by former CEO of Cone Health, Dennis Barry.

Readers probably know most of what is in the proposal, but it's worth listing the stated goals: 1. to improve quality of care and outcomes, 2. to secure budget predictability, and 3. to build on what we have in North Carolina. Hopefully all of these goals will add up to the broader desired outcome of "sustainability" frequently cited by supporters of the effort, and achieved, according to the Advisory Committee and others, though a statewide system of Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), modeled after those created for Medicare in the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

When they learned the basic structure of the plan, providers mainly heaved a sigh of relief while policy analysts give it a general "thumbs up". This is, after all, so much better than the privatization plan originally proposed. However, significant questions remain: What real assurance do we have that ACOs will work for this specialized group of patients? Will realigned incentives to traditional providers be enough either to reduce cost to the state (always an elusive goal) or to actually improve outcomes? How in the world can mental health be integrated into primary care as outlined in the proposal when the mental health system in NC is currently gasping for air? What is really in store for the patients who will be asked to navigate uncharted waters in a newly designed system of care? Will any of the savings achieved go back to them to cover the essential benefits now out of reach. Dental care, too long ignored and but sorely needed by Medicaid patients, comes to mind.

Finally, even if providers are "incentivized to render quality care efficiently" as Mardy Peal, an adviser to Dr. Wos, states, what are the guarantees that the rewards will be enough to keep physicians on the roster? If the state cannot attract enough MD's to sustain the system, how will other safety net providers - nurse practitioners and physician assistants, for example- gain sufficient voice and monetary rewards to bring them into the ACO system as proposed?

This bears watching. Single payer advocates know that health care organized in any way, shape or form outside a same system- for- all is likely to run into the same old familiar problems we have today.

While we watch, here is what we can do: keep the pressure on for Medicaid expansion. Logic tells us that addi-

tional Medicaid funds for NC from federal coffers, 15 billion dollars by some estimates, will only strengthen the program. And it is not unreasonable to expect that savings might be achieved over the next several years by economies of scale and new options from a robust enrollment of newly eligible adults. This cannot help but move the needle towards sustainability and ultimately greater endorsement of public programs.

Perhaps it is not too much to hope that at the end of the day "We're all in this together" will become the motto that guides policy makers, replacing the "fix it first" partisan rhetoric now choking public discourse.

To learn more, visit these resources:

DHHS official site, updated as developments occur

- * <http://blog.ncdhhs.gov/post/78140239160/dhhs-presents-realistic-achievable-medicare-reform>

Media pieces from around the state

- * http://www.news-record.com/article_19f40e27-b2e1-591c-97bd-43da7672058a.html?mode=story
- * <http://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2014/03/18/medicaid-plan-likely-to-face-tough-road-through-general-assembly/>

Advocacy from the NC Justice Center and NC Policy Watch

- * <http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2013/11/24/nc-medicare-broken-not-really-new-evidence-contradicts-state-auditor-governor-mccrory/>
- * <http://www.ncjustice.org/?q=health/nc-health-report-gov-mccrory-sec-wos-surrender-medicare-reform-privatization>
- * <http://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2014/03/18/medicaid-reform-a-test-of-mccrorys-leadership/>

Board Member Highlight: Bill Murray

Graduate from Yale Divinity School (1969) and Harvard Business School (1974) Bill has always had a special ministry toward the work place with emphasis on improving the quality of work life.

In 1999, he became one of the first Master Certified Coaches and was one of the first coaches to offer Executive Coaching and on-line training. He now has a large virtual training program drawing from his leadership experience in the corporate world. He specializes in training individuals to excel with people skills in both large and small organizations.

Bill is offering pro bono coaching courses for any audiences that advocate for health care and other good causes. He can be reached at [919-240-7924](tel:919-240-7924).

We are now very fortunate to have Bill's support in our initiatives advocating for health care for all in NC. (See his article on expanding Medicaid on page 2)