FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Good Shepherd Clinic Receives Grant to Focus on Behavioral Health for the Underserved

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — Good Shepherd Clinic announced today a grant award received from Telligen Community Initiative, an Iowa-based, private, charitable foundation. The grant funding will support Good Shepherd Clinic’s initiative to improve and expand access of behavioral health care services to low-income and uninsured patients in Oklahoma City.

Good Shepherd Clinic is working in collaboration with Oklahoma City University’s (OCU) Physician Assistant (PA) Program. Through this initiative, OCU PA students will receive hands-on, interactive educational learning opportunities and acquire clinical-based, supervised experience through evaluation and management of underserved patients.

"Living in poverty produces high levels of stress and can have a powerful effect on an individual’s mental and physical health,” says Pam Timmons, executive director of Good Shepherd. “This grant will assist medical students in becoming more aware of the vulnerability of people living in poverty and the impact of stress and mental health issues on their overall health and quality of life. This is an important part of medical training and the care provided is a critical need for many people in our community.”

The project is led by OCU’s PA students, volunteer PA’s and OCU faculty. The team approach to patient care and safety is emphasized, as is the integration of behavioral health diagnosis and services, while students participate in the work-up, diagnosis, treatment and education of each patient.

As part of this initiative, Nikki Brooks, PA-C, oversees the clinical work of Kyndel Carter, PA-SI, and helps the PA student address mental illness as part of the regular treatment plans she develops for her patients for their overall health and well-being.

One of Carter’s patients, Carolina, is a 53 year-old woman diagnosed with bipolar disorder at the age of 28.

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Before coming to Good Shepherd Clinic, she had no other medical options to keep her medications balanced, in hopes of maintaining a healthy and productive life. As a result, Carolina had frequented various hospital emergency rooms to treat her depression and had experienced countless days without sleep.

Through the care services offered at Good Shepherd Clinic, Caroline is appreciative of the support and receiving the care she needed. She is also thankful for the referral Carter provided to a nonprofit organization that is now offering her free, long-term behavioral health counseling.

“I feel for anyone dealing with mental illness, especially when family members or friends may not understand the challenges,” said Carolina. “Today, I have a great support system in the providers at Good Shepherd, and I greatly appreciate each and every day I live in peace.”

The grant from Telligen Community Initiative, along with the OCU PA Program, provides much needed support to the most vulnerable in the greater Oklahoma City area. They do this by providing access to primary and behavioral health care, as well as serving as a resource for much needed prescription medications.

“The support provided to Good Shepherd Clinic is a part of our priority to ensure opportunities for improving physical and mental health are available and accessible to everyone,” said Matt McGarvey, executive director of Telligen Community Initiative. “This program is an important step toward building healthier lives and communities in Oklahoma City.”

According to the United Health Foundation, Oklahoma ranks 45th among all states in the U.S. regarding overall health, which includes access to primary care and health metrics. Oklahomans face a number of chronic health problems, such as obesity, heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. Given this, an expanded PA workforce and access to primary care providers to serve underserved individuals and families in Oklahoma is critical to improving community health in the future.

"When people have access to care for doctor's appointments, needed medications and receive education on how to manage those conditions, they become more actively engaged in their own health outcomes," Timmons said. "The access to care Good Shepherd Clinic helps keep people out of the emergency room and provides a significant cost savings for the patient, hospital system and taxpayers.”

Founded in 1977, Good Shepherd Clinic is a nonprofit clinic in the heart of midtown Oklahoma City. The clinic relies solely on donations from the community and grants and does not receive federal, state or insurance reimbursements. Good Shepherd Clinic provides free quality medical and dental care, along with free prescription medications, in its mission to break the cycle of poverty for Oklahoman patients and families.

For more information about Good Shepherd Clinic, upcoming events or volunteering, please visit www.GoodShepherdOKC.org or call (405) 754-5190.

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