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news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oldest Clinic Discovering New Ways to Care

RICHMOND, Va.—When nearly 50% of your patients are struggling with diabetes and hypertension, it's time to think outside the box and look for innovative approaches to primary care. Health Brigade, formerly Fan Free Clinic, is again leading the charge on responding to the community's health challenges. On June 1 from 8-9:30 a.m., Health Brigade will cut the ribbon on a new program for its patients called the Food Farmacy.

The goal of the Food Farmacy is to manage diabetes, high blood pressure and behavioral health needs of food-insecure patients. It will help individuals gain access to healthy fresh produce by partnering with Shalom Farms, known for their work in the community to ensure access to healthy food. This pilot program will focus on helping patients control their diabetes through healthy eating and will take a personalized approach to care, with weekly coaching by Health Brigade volunteer nurses and dieticians and with monitoring of blood sugar and blood pressure and medications.

In collaboration with community partners, a group of patients will receive cooking and nutrition classes along with weekly fresh produce and healthy foods for 12 weeks. Shalom Farms will donate 300 servings of produce per week and will help the Food Farmacy provide hands on cooking experiences using fresh fruits and vegetables.

According to Dr Wendy Klein, medical director at Health Brigade, "Health can be improved with better nutrition if we help patients to overcome the barriers between them and healthful eating. By giving fresh, healthy food and by giving patients the educational tools to make positive lifestyle choices, by enabling understanding and mindfulness, we can keep them healthier, and ultimately save lives as well as healthcare dollars."

"We see some of the sickest patients in the community, many of whom live in food deserts," says Karen A. Legato, executive director at Health Brigade. "For years, we have had a traditional food pantry to supplement our patients' nutritional needs. Now, we have an opportunity to provide a structured approach to healthy eating with the Food Farmacy model. It's one thing to tell patients to go out and make good food choices. It's another to provide fresh food and hands on learning that will help them and their families to think about food differently."

Health Brigade was able to embark on this creative way to offer care through a \$48,000 grant from the SUPERVALU Foundation. SUPERVALU is one of the largest grocery wholesalers and retailers in the U.S., serving more than 2,300 stores across the country including Virginia.

"We're pleased to have been able to help the Food Farmacy become a reality," said Kevin Kemp, president of SUPERVALU's wholesale division located in Mechanicsville. "SUPERVALU's mission to feed our communities takes on special significance when innovative programs like this provide not only access to healthy food, but nutrition education as well."

The ribbon-cutting event will take place in the Ginn Auditorium at Health Brigade at 1010 N. Thompson Street. Health Brigade was the first free clinic in Virginia, established in 1968.

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