



health brigade  
2021

HEROES  
IMPACT  
REPORT

## Dear Friends,

With all of you, we made it through another year of the COVID-19 pandemic! We know you understand exactly what we mean when we say so much has changed.

During this difficult period across the world, where pandemic challenges exacerbated divisions amid colliding crises of illness, natural disasters, violence and incivility, there is another reality—recognizing and embracing our collective human need to connect and care about each other.

*"There is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it."* -Amanda Gorman

Yes, heroes are still among us and bravely working together to bring light and healing to those suffering among us.

Over this past year, you chose to remain heroes in action through your generous investment in the health of the community. You trusted us to steward

less restricted resources with integrity and equity at a time of competing needs among so many in our community.

The success of our work over this past year was only possible because of the relationships built and the forging of collaborative efforts with...

- YOU, our supporters,
- Other community providers and partners, and
- Our volunteers and staff.

This synergy of caring and collaboration enabled Health Brigade to implement creative models of care to reach the most vulnerable patients and clients across the region.

We navigated the pandemic peaks using a hybrid model of safe on-site visits and telehealth tools.

We offered testing and vaccines, not only at our facility, but across a broad spectrum of venues where people gathered—neighborhood events, basketball games, curbside, and homes. Dr. Waller, our Medical Director,

spent many evenings and weekends out in the community offering testing and vaccines to populations most impacted by COVID-19.

Early on, our Mental Health & Wellness program pivoted quickly to use telehealth in reaching clients. With the addition of a trilingual therapist, client visits with Spanish-speaking clients rose 432% from 132 visits last year to 572 this year.

Health Outreach programs like Comprehensive Harm Reduction and Ryan White Part B never stopped meeting clients where they were—be it on the street, on a front porch step, or sitting in driveway lawn chairs. As one staff member put it, "We put ourselves at 'responsible risk' just doing our jobs."

Our hope is that this report provides you a brief snapshot into the "good" that continues to happen day to day at Health Brigade to make life a little better for our community.

With deepest gratitude,

*Karen A. Legato*  
Karen A. Legato  
Executive Director



*Keisha L. Smith*  
Keisha L. Smith  
Board Chair



## Key Performance Statistics

**32%**  
.....  
22,916 total

**PATIENTS/CLIENTS ENCOUNTERS**  
INCREASE in total number of encounters across all Health Brigade programs

**25%**  
.....  
9,577 total

**MEDICAL CLINIC**  
INCREASE in number of medical clinic patient visits

**432%**  
.....

INCREASE in number of sessions for Spanish/Portuguese-speaking clients; 572 total

**43%**  
.....  
3,333 total

**HEALTH OUTREACH**  
INCREASE in total unique Health Outreach clients

**PrEP**  
**32%**  
.....

INCREASE in number of clients served; 118 total

**29%**  
.....  
3652 total

**RYAN WHITE PART B**  
INCREASE in case management encounters

**101%**  
.....  
1,937 total

**COMPREHENSIVE HARM REDUCTION SYRINGE EXCHANGE**  
INCREASE in number of clients served; 75% INCREASE in referrals to other services; 37% INCREASE in Naloxone units distributed

## Financial Snapshot

July 1, 2020 — June 30, 2021

### CASH REVENUE + IN-KIND



Total In-kind Services \$8,013,539 - \$4,251,117 = **\$3,762,422 TOTAL CASH REVENUE**

### CASH EXPENSES + IN-KIND



Total In-kind Services \$7,475,208 - \$4,251,117 = **\$3,224,091 TOTAL CASH EXPENSES**

**Difference in Net Assets / Surplus = \$538,331**



## Our Mission

The mission of Health Brigade is to provide exceptional health services to those least served in a caring and non-judgmental environment.

## Our Cover

Our front cover features HB Medical Director Dr. Rachel Waller giving a COVID-19 test to a community member. Photo by Samia Minnicks.

## Our Lists

The following lists can be found on our website at [www.healthbrigade.org/2021AnnualReport](http://www.healthbrigade.org/2021AnnualReport)

- Board of Directors List
- Annual Fund Donor List
- Staff List
- Volunteer List



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## Primary Medical Care

The COVID pandemic has caused Health Brigade to be even more innovative in how it serves patients on site and in the community.

To ensure the safest environment for offering care, the medical clinic modified how patients were seen in person, through telehealth and in the community.

The medical team continued throughout the pandemic to provide a broad scope of services and medications using a hybrid model.

In addition to providing continued quality care in the clinic, our Medical Director **Dr. Rachel Waller** went out into the community on weeknights and weekends to test for COVID-19 and to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to meet the ongoing need.

Dr. Waller was particularly committed to RVA League for Safer Streets. Started in 2017, the basketball league has a mission to provide educational and recreational activities that enable Richmond youth to

engage in building life-enhancing skills and values.

Since November of last year, Dr. Waller has voluntarily conducted nearly 1,000 COVID-19 tests on league players to ensure they participated safely. Dr. Waller was also instrumental in coordinating testing/vaccination events at the Virginia Science Museum, Southwood Apartments in South Richmond and at several community health fairs.

"There is still a lot of resistance to the vaccine," Dr. Waller said, "we are working hard to overcome the misinformation and fear by being present and answering questions."

With Dr. Waller, Health Brigade has partnered with Richmond City Police events, the Richmond Region LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens), and La Casa De La Salud with the goal of reaching black and Latino members of the community who are impacted disproportionately by the pandemic.



Rachel Waller, MD, FACP

Photo by Jay Paul

## Mental Health & Wellness

Richmond's Health Brigade has a long history of meeting patients where they are. Created more than a half century ago in Richmond's "Fan" district, the former Fan Free Clinic became the first free clinic in the Commonwealth.

From its very beginning, Health Brigade put a premium on inclusivity, swinging its doors wide to the community, irrespective of a patient's race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or ability to pay. Its compassionate, non-judgmental environment helped forge a reputation focused on helping the individual.

But the advent of the pandemic quickly challenged Health Brigade's longstanding capacity to serve its patients. And yet, the service teams pivoted quickly – though with some uncertainty – toward an agency wide telehealth model.

"I was one of the skeptics," recalls **Dr. Muriel Azria-Evans**, Health Brigade's Director of Mental Health & Wellness. "I do a lot of trauma work, and I thought, 'is it going to be the same?' I'm not holding space. I can't lean in. Am I going to be able to see the nonverbal in the same way?"

And now? "I have to say, I was pretty pleasantly surprised," she says. "I think the care is equally effective. I think that the therapeutic relationship is not harmed, and you're still able to really provide quality care through a telehealth format."



Muriel Azria-Evans, MD

Photo by Jay Paul

Dr. Azria-Evans also notes the logistical advantages of telemedicine, especially for so many of her clients that live 100 percent below the poverty level and for whom transportation to and from the clinic is a major undertaking.

"I'd have clients that would be on two buses to get to me for a 50-minute mental health session, and two buses to go home. So now we've spent three-and-a-half hours away from home or work. There's a cost to that."

On the logistical front, Dr. Azria-Evans found the transition especially painless. The agency invested in a new phone system with a free video platform like Zoom that was confidential and HIPAA compliant.

They created secure links for clients, making recurring meetings easy, safe, and convenient.

Moving forward, Dr. Azria-Evans doesn't foresee telehealth becoming the default means for seeing patients but predicts that a hybrid model will likely emerge.

In other words, Health Brigade is once again meeting their patients where they are.

This blog was written by the Virginia Telehealth Network as part of its series to address equity in telehealth. For more information, visit [thehealthvirginia.org](http://thehealthvirginia.org).

## Health Outreach & Advocacy

Care was extended across the hood of a car, six feet from the doorstep or sitting, wearing masks, in lawn chairs on the driveway. The Health Outreach & Advocacy (HOA) team never stopped going out into the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We were putting ourselves at 'responsible risk' just doing our jobs," said Community Case Manager **Jihad Abdulmumit**.

The pandemic caused a lot of people to live in isolation which caused a lot of anxiety. "It has been important to us to meet our clients where they are," said **Leah Gregory**, Ryan White Part B Program Manager. "So, we went to clients' homes."

"It has been all about relationship building," said **Ace Canessa**, Ryan White Case Manager.

"I'm grateful that we were able to grow our service during this time. We met needs besides providing clean needles," said

**Dziko Singleton**, CHR Program Co-coordinator. "We could check on people and provide them with food, water and hygiene products."

While the HIV testing program had to go on break until safe testing could resume at the clinic, IDU Outreach Specialist **Edward Peters** visited New Season, a methadone clinic, and The Healing Place, a homeless shelter, to provide HIV and HepC testing. He said he was proud to have had a hand in the HepC testing and treatment of one person and getting another onto PrEP to prevent the transmission of HIV.

"COVID has challenged us to find creative ways to engage people," said **Cristina Kincaid**, director of HOA. "We've been able to reflect on how we provide services moving forward."

The HOA department has approximately 10,000 encounters annually with persons needing their services.



Photo by Patricia Mendenhall

DEI DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION

### INSIDE SCOOP

Agency devoted 10-page issue of internal newsletter to the local protests fighting for justice after the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers.



### JUNETEENTH

Agency followed the lead of the Commonwealth of Virginia to observe Juneteenth as a holiday.



### CONSULTATION

Health Brigade hired Yolanda Avent, Diversity & Social Justice Educator, to help assess our systems, culture and create a plan of action to become a more diverse, just and equitable organization.



### TERMSDAY TUESDAY

DEI Team members began to share social justice vocabulary on weekly basis.



### DEI TEAMS

Staff DEI Team led Training & Restorative Justice efforts for Staff and Board DEI Team directed DEI Training & Strategy efforts for Board



### WORKSHOP

Staff attended a 3-hour Diversity Equity & Inclusion workshop on Power Dynamics & Privilege led by Brooke Taylor, a social justice advocate and scholar who has dedicated their life to serving marginalized communities.

