



health brigade

Inside Scoop

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WELCOMING • TRUSTED • INCLUSIVE • INTEGRATED • IMPACTFUL • RESPONSIVE

Health Brigade provides exceptional health services to those least served in a caring and non-judgmental environment.

Thanking Our Volunteers



Dear Volunteer & Intern Brigade,

As the year begins to wind down, we are called to reflect on our experiences over the past year. Together we have been through highs and lows, but it is so encouraging to know that our Brigade answered the call to action in our fight for compassionate and quality whole-person healthcare for our Richmond area community.

I am continually filled with awe at your dedication, resilience, and persistence to support the team members, patients, and clients you work with. You touch every single department across the agency, and we literally could not do this work without you. The spirited energy you share is a huge breath of fresh air and motivation to the folks you work with. The work you do, from admin to clinician, is essential to delivering services. I appreciate you and am filled with gratitude for you.

With Many Thanks,

Kelsea Teter

Volunteer Program Manager



Welcoming A New Volunteer



During the month of November, the medical clinic welcomed a new volunteer practitioner, **Dr. Trudy Rickman**. She retired in July 2023 after over 20 years with Nephrology Specialists. The practice was strictly nephrology with a large dialysis and kidney transplant population. Dr. Rickman is board certified in both nephrology and internal medicine.

After taking a full year off from anything medical, Dr. Rickman was looking for volunteer positions and found Health Brigade.

"I had exposure to uninsured and/or migrant patients during my 20 years of inpatient rounds in the neighboring hospitals," she said. "In many cases, these patients were hospitalized with acute or chronic medical conditions that could have been prevented if only they had received earlier interventions/treatment in the outpatient setting." She said it seemed the uninsured patient waited longer to seek medical attention due to barriers to care: financial, social or other reasons.

"The patients I have seen at Health Brigade have been just wonderful—appreciative, kind and genuinely interested in their healthcare. I love that!"

Volunteer Sees Global Connections



Khalid Elshowaya has volunteered with the HB Comprehensive Harm Reduction Program since 2020. As CHR's longest serving volunteer, he recently sat down with CHR Co-coordinators **Colin King** and **Dziko Singleton** to answer questions about his service.

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Interview with Khalid Elshowaya from page 1

Khalid, What initially inspired you to get involved in harm reduction, and what motivates you to keep going, even through the challenging times?

The reason I started volunteering at a harm reduction program was to learn about other people's points of view and worldviews. I've observed that many people, especially leaders and practitioners, have perceptions of others' worldviews but not a true perspective. To truly have a perspective, I need to be able to put myself in their shoes to better understand how they make the best decisions they can. To be honest, I'm nowhere close to that goal, but I have the resolve to keep progressing, even if it's just marginally.

How has your perspective on harm reduction evolved over the years, and what moments or experiences have shaped that growth?

I initially thought harm reduction was some sort of point solution, like a potion or antidote. But the more time I spend around these incredible people at CHR, the more I understand that harm reduction is part of a complex system of variables that lead to second and third-order effects. I've observed that social workers grasp all these variables and the emergent properties, but real-world constraints prevent them from fully addressing these deeply entrenched problems. Being around them is also a constant reminder that I have food on the table and a roof over my head, and that grounds me with a sense of gratitude.

What impact do you hope your work will have on both the individuals you help and the community as a whole?

I don't think my work has made a significant difference yet, but I'm learning a lot about systems thinking and cultivating a curious, observant approach. One day, I hope this understanding will help me see the complex web of variables and nodes that is human health. Once I better understand these levers and systems, we may be able to turn the knobs or reshape what health looks like for people.

Tell us a little more about the project you have been working on over the last couple of years and why you are invested in renewable energy.

I went to Eastern Africa to help people who didn't have access to affordable energy. One of the biggest drivers of economic development and Gross Domestic Product is the ability to consume power. (GDP is a measure of the total value of all goods and services produced in a country over a specific period of time.) You can track any country's development and GDP with a high correlation to how much power they consume. I wasn't able to raise the millions needed to make a significant impact, so I'm trying again in the U.S. with the goal of eventually returning. The moment we make America energy independent, we reduce significant geopolitical turmoil, lower the risk of wars, and increase our chances of a prosperous future.

(For more information on how to support Khalid's work to create renewable energy, email him at elshowayak@gmail.com)

Supporting Other Causes

On **October 25**, CHR was in attendance at the first annual Dana Sally-Allen Foundation luncheon at the Peter Paul Community Center in Richmond.

HB CHR Co-Coordinator **Dziko Singleton** served as mistress of ceremonies. CHR Co-Coordinator **Colin King** and Associate **Deia Weatherman** spoke on the importance of peer support in recovery spaces.

The goal of the new program will offer residential housing for women in various stages of recovery.



VCU Humphrey Fellows



On **Nov. 1**, the new cohort of VCU Humphrey fellows from around the world visited with HB's executive director **Karen Legato** (wearing name tag) to learn about safety-net organizations in Richmond. Program Coordinator Dr. Wendy Kliever, third from right, accompanied the group.

Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are the glue that keeps HB's Comprehensive Harm Reduction program together!

On a perfect **November** day, Aetna, CARITAS, RHHD, Daily Planet and friends from City Hall and Henrico Mental Health all came out to CHR's Southside location to provide lunch, vaccines, blood pressure checks and referrals!



Shoes Donated for Clients



On **Nov. 6**, Katie's Soles, a local nonprofit (<https://www.katiessoles.org>), donated 50 pairs of new and gently used shoes for distribution to our clients in the Comprehensive Harm Reduction program. Special thanks to **Kim Koger**, CHR Social Work Intern, who organized the donation.

L to R: **Colin King**, CHR co-coordinator, and **Kim Koger** receiving the donation.

VA DSS Lends a Hand



Special thanks to a volunteer group from the **Virginia Department of Social Services** for lending a hand to paint our wheel chair ramp on **Nov. 8**. (L to R: Alex Vanik, Jae-Young Choe, friend Darrius Hall, Shelita Gaskins and Leanne Costantinidis)

Continued Training

On **Nov. 10**, **Jordin Cotman**, HB Lead Trans Health Services Case Mgr. & Outreach Advocate, recently completed a leadership and organizational building training in Atlanta, GA, with **Solutions Not Punishment Collaborative** and the **Center for Third World Organizing**.

This comprehensive training equipped Jordin with cutting-edge strategies for social change, ground outreach, campaign development, and leadership cultivation. A highlight of the experience, according to Jordin, was the opportunity to directly apply her newfound knowledge in the field—conducting outreach on the streets of Atlanta. This hands-on approach not only enhanced her skills but also deepened her commitment to creating tangible change within communities.



MDA Supports Agency



On **Nov. 14**, the **Museum District Association** awarded Health Brigade and four other entities \$1,000 gifts for dedicated support to the district community and surrounding Richmond area. Funds came from proceeds of the 2024 MDA Mother's Day House & Garden Tour. (Receiving the check for HB is **Jo Blanton**, Donor Engagement Officer, second from the right in photo of recipients.)

Sharing Expertise



On **Nov. 14**, HB Director of Mental Health & Wellness **Dr. Muriel Azria-Evans** spoke at the **Virginia Counselors Association Conference** at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. Her talk was about Addressing Imposter Syndrome: During internship, residency, as a supervisor, and as a seasoned counselor.

L to R: **Dr. Azria-Evans** and **Dr. Lakesha Roney**, former HB staff and VCA president.

■ **Addressing Imposter Syndrome (IP/IS): During internship, residency, supervision, and as a seasoned counselor.**



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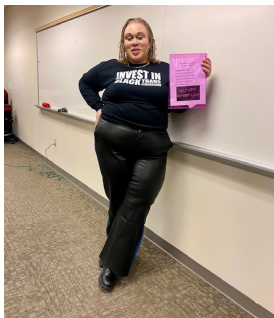
Virginia Counselors Association Conference
November 14, 2024

Muriel Azria-Evans, PhD, CFLE, CRC, LPC, CCTP
Director, Mental Health & Wellness
Pronouns: she/her/hers
mazria-evans@healthbrigade.org

Speaking at TIES

On **Nov. 17**, **Jordin Cotman** offered a workshop called "Self Lovin' In and Out" at the 9th annual **Transgender Information and Empowerment Summit (TIES)** hosted by **Equality Virginia**.

With expertise and passion, Jordin guided participants on a journey of authentic self-love, exploring emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions of self-empowerment.



Through this session, attendees were equipped with the tools and insights to cultivate self-love in its truest form, fostering deeper connections with themselves and their communities. This workshop was pivotal for individuals seeking to embrace their whole selves with confidence and authenticity.

From its inception in 2014 with just 200 attendees to a virtual crowd of over 700 in 2021, TIES has continuously expanded its reach, embracing hundreds from Virginia, DC, Maryland, and beyond. This year, TIES was thrilled to welcome over 400 participants to reconnect in person for the first time since 2019.

Flu Shot Clinic Held at HB



Walgreens staff member Alyssa Smith, pharmD prepares to give the flu shot.

On **Nov. 22**, the medical clinic in partnership with **Walgreens** held a flu shot clinic. A total of 27 uninsured persons received the vaccine through this effort.

Welcoming New Donor Engagement Officers



Jo Blanton grew up in Bumpass, Virginia in a mixed Lakota and white household. He graduated from VCU and has been a long time Richmonder. Being raised in rural Virginia by his parents and grandparents both, he was instilled with a strong connection to the natural world around him and how we are all a part of the same whole. The importance of justice and giving back is also a value that has guided his career. "Throughout my 14-year career, I've had the privilege of serving in several types of causes, including LGBTQ+ advocacy, animal welfare, housing, and ecological conservation. I'm excited to be a part of an organization that serves as a pillar for our community. When I'm not working, I am usually painting, enjoying long walks, or cuddled up with my cats watching anime. I have two cats named Scraggs and Bippity."



"Hi there! I'm **Patience Salgado**, a seasoned community organizer, kindness worker, compassion photographer, storyteller, grassroots fundraiser and one of the new Donor Engagement Officers here at Health Brigade.

After 20 years of broad social impact work and learning from so many, I live for the moments rooted in a deeper empathy and shared humanity that invite people to build community together, mutually investing in themselves and each other for the collective good.

I'm really excited for the opportunity to offer my heart, values and passion in service to the mission and people of Health Brigade. I look forward to getting to know you all and continuing to create meaningful connections that support the vital work of providing integrated, comprehensive and diverse care for those least served in our community.

When I'm not making a new friend in a checkout line, wandering with my dog on a river trail or dreaming up my next backpacking adventure, you can find me around my big dining room table being laughed at or with my endearing and messy family of seven."