



May 2025 | Issue #136

WELCOMING • TRUSTED • INCLUSIVE • INTEGRATED • IMPACTFUL • RESPONSIVE

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

Health Brigade Holds News Conference/Town Hall to Address Funding Cuts to Programs

On **May 29**, Health Brigade had over 100 people turn out for a News Conference/Town to discuss the cuts in services due to \$1.8 million in federal/state funding cuts. The crowd included patients/clients, community leaders, community partners, volunteers, board members, donors, concerned citizens, legislators, media and current and former staff members.

We made a statement true to our roots that CARE IS RESISTANCE and COMMUNITY IS POWER. We hope this will be just the beginning of many conversations and efforts to come.

See **page 2** for HB Executive Director **Karen Legato's** remarks and more photos from the event.



Photos by Patricia Munford

1010 North Thompson Street • Richmond, Virginia 23230 • www.healthbrigade.org



www.facebook.com/healthbrigade



www.instagram.com/healthbrigade_rva

Continued from page 1



“Good Afternoon and Welcome! Thank you all for coming out to discuss the diminishing safety net health system in the greater Richmond region and Central Virginia. I am Karen Legato, executive director of Health Brigade, formerly Fan Free Clinic.



Fan Free Clinic was the first free and charitable clinic in Virginia. We are now in our 55th year. We became Health Brigade in 2016 to better reflect that we are more than a medical clinic in one location, but rather a brigade that extends out into the community across hundreds of neighborhoods and locations.



Health is what we do, and Brigade is how we do it. If you think of a bucket brigade—it’s members of community working side by side to put out healthcare fires or share our services, neighbor to neighbor, to make life better for all of us.



Fan Free Clinic and Health Brigade are the same organization.

Health Brigade is just much larger and more expansive than it was 55 years ago. Fan Free/Health Brigade’s history is grounded in grass roots medicine and social justice. Our mission remains to “provide exceptional

health services to those least served in a caring and non-judgmental environment. That means care to everyone who is “least served” for whatever reason. Today, Fan Free Clinic/Health Brigade is coming back to its roots and calling together the community who supported this work and continue to support our work.

Health Brigade is at a turning point—a crisis created by a rapid loss of federal and state funding, despite good performance and impactful results for patients and clients. In less than one year, Health Brigade has received 1.84 million in federal/state cuts to programs and facility maintenance upgrades. We are witnessing the largest cuts in the healthcare safety net system that has ever been made.

This is not just Health Brigade, these cuts are impacting multiple nonprofit health clinics, public health departments, hospitals and medical providers across the state. We are now on the verge of the feds taking a chainsaw to Medicaid, which will exacerbate the crisis of access to care primarily for low-income residents and vulnerable community members.

Medical and public health



Photos by Patricia Munford

professionals know that a virus like COVID or more deadly virus could hit us at any time. If that were to happen today, given the damage done, and the further anticipated dismantling of the health safety net system. It could snuff us out person by person and community by community.

If there was ever a time we needed to speak up and act, it is today. We are asking you to CARE.

Care is resistance!

Today, the spirit and experience of Fan Free Clinic will rise again in Health Brigade to lead efforts in our community to prompt people to CARE again!

We don't know every form that will take yet, but our goal is to educate, advocate, and activate we the people.

We know there are many huge problems in our systems and institutions. We know public policy is complicated despite how simple people will try to make it. **We know as humans, we can easily fall into "either/or thinking" about people, issues, problems, and even solutions. We know how to deeply hurt each other and devolve into mobs.** We know most humans are control freaks because the alternative seems to be living in fear all the time.

Our antidote to this is to choose to CARE again.

When we care, we resist the fear, we resist the bullying, we resist the hate, we resist turning others into enemies to push our political agendas, enrich ourselves, or gain power over others.

When we care, we embrace all of us—

We care about the poor, the disenfranchised, the well-heeled, the first world and third world problems.

We care about our neighbors—immigrants, Black and Brown people, all people of color, white people, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Atheists, Agnostics, Hindus and people of all religious or non-religious backgrounds.

Our call to action today is to CARE, when we lean into caring, it will move us to productive action— personally, professionally, and politically. None of us have the luxury of checking out. Now is the time for courage, creativity, and turning caring into action.

Today's gathering is not a one and done. Today is the beginning of our Care is Resistance movement to hold the people's town halls. Ghandi said, when the people lead, the leaders will follow. It is time for the people to lead. Let's do this! ”

**Remarks for Press Conference/ Town Hall
Karen Legato, Executive Director, Health Brigade
May 29, 2025**



NOTE: Richmond Times-Dispatch story and link to event recording on page 11.

Celebrating Volunteers



In late **April**, **Craig Caudill** (holding the cake in photo) completed a Bonner Scholars internship from University of Richmond. He is graduating and preparing to go to University of Michigan to pursue a master's in public health. He has been a great help in the medical clinic and we're going to miss him dearly.

CHR: Educating the Public

During **May**, the HB Comprehensive Harm Reduction (CHR) team was out in the community educating the public about challenges faced by persons with substance use disorder.

On **May 20**, the HB CHR Team presented at VCU's *Research To Recovery Conference* on their work in providing harm reduction and peer support in Richmond as well as throughout the state.

CHR Co-Coordinator **Colin King**, far right in photo, moderated the panel.



On **May 21**, CHR Co-Coordinator Dziko Singleton presented at NASTAD's annual meeting in Washington, D.C. The subject matter surrounded drug user health, harm reduction, and Hep C care for vulnerable communities.



On **May 22**, CHR Co-Coordinator **Dziko Singleton** and her sister **Zahni Bradley** presented at VCU's Research to Recovery Family Panel. This presentation involved familial perspectives from family support. Zahni has become a Family Support Specialist in recent months.



HB Holds 31st Art Brigade Exhibit

On **May 22**, HB held its 31st exhibit of The Art Brigade featuring local 23-year-old artist **Justyn Canada**. Our youngest artist to date, this was Justyn's first art show which included his acrylic paintings, colored pencil and charcoal drawings.

Photos by Bob Papas



Former Art Brigade artist **Julian Desta** interviews **Justyn Canada** about his art and process.



Above on right: Justyn's grandmother **Darlene Brown** shares her memories of Justyn starting to draw at the age of 2.



Above L to R: HB board member **Dr. Yolanda Avent** with daughter **Lindsey**; HB board member **Laura McLaughlin**; HB ELC member **Dr. Courtney Blondino**; HB board member **Joanna Fowler**.



L to R: **Justyn** chats with former Art Brigade artist **Lizzie Brown** about his work.



L to R: HB medical clinic volunteer **Paula Brockenbrough** chats with local jewelry artist **Sherry Siewert** whose work is featured for sale in the glass cabinets.

Justyn Canada has the following images from his show available for sale as 11" x 14" prints for \$25 each. To place an order for a print, contact **Julie Sulik** at jsulik@healthbrigade.org.



Weight of the World



The Good Ol Gals



A River Runs Through Her Eyes



A Humble Face



Geometrical Life



The Take Over



Through the President's Eyes



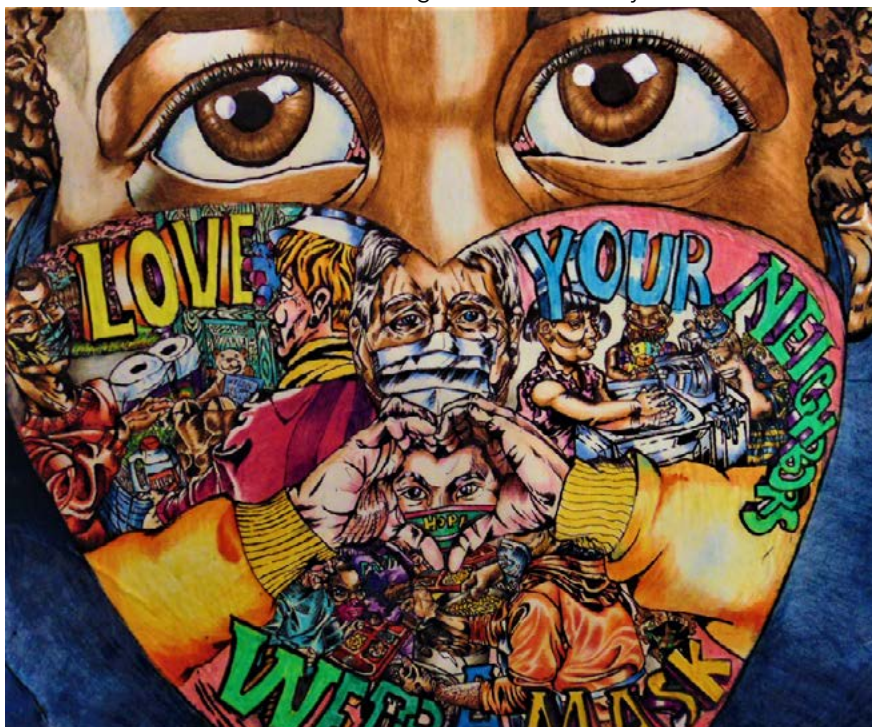
Sweet Caroline



A Mother's Worth



A Lot in Common



Unite Together

Getting to Know Our Board Members

HB board member Yolanda Avent, PhD brings over 25 years of expertise in Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) to her work as the Founder and CEO of Avent Diversity Consulting, LLC. Her career reflects a deep commitment to helping individuals and institutions create more inclusive and equitable spaces where everyone feels they belong.

Dr. Avent earned her bachelor's degree in history and her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on Educational Psychology from Virginia Tech. She also holds a master's degree in criminal justice from Armstrong Atlantic State University in Savannah, Georgia (now Georgia Southern University). Her content expertise spans a wide range of areas including racial equity, implicit bias, identity development, neurodiversity, microaggressions, leadership development, strategic planning, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution.

In addition to her consulting work, Dr. Avent has served as an adjunct professor at Virginia Tech, Penn State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Georgia Southern University, teaching courses in education, diversity, and leadership. She passionately believes that understanding our collective world history is a roadmap to reconciliation, healing, liberation, and justice.

A nationally recognized speaker and facilitator, Dr. Avent was the keynote speaker at the UnMasking Charlottesville Symposium following the tragic 2017 white supremacist

violence. Her keynote focused on dismantling systemic racism and advancing collective healing. Earlier in her career, she was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation through Virginia Tech's Departmental Level Reform (DLR) project to conduct international research in Taiwan on student motivation and curriculum design in engineering education.

Avent Diversity Consulting has provided IDEA-focused training and strategic guidance for a wide array of clients, including corporations, government agencies, healthcare systems, nonprofits, and law enforcement.

Dr. Avent is a proud 27-year member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She enjoys spending time with her daughter Kendall, her family, and her spoiled cat Jenga. She is also a fan of old-school hip-hop, travel, and is a fierce competitor in board games.



I am passionate about serving on the Health Brigade Board because I believe that everyone deserves access to high-quality, culturally responsive health care. Health Brigade stands out as a trusted provider, offering top-tier services and compassionate care to those who need it most. I'm honored to support an organization so deeply committed to health equity and community well-being.

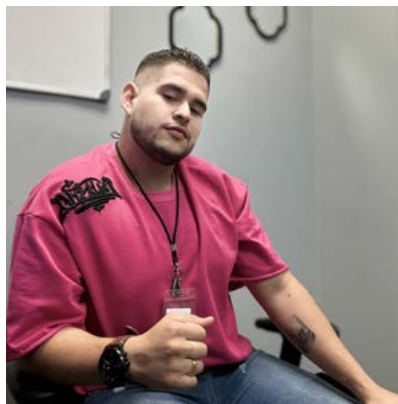
HB board member Laura McLaughlin, MPH is a public health professional currently supporting Elevance Health's Medicaid business by working to transform data into actionable insights and build a culture of data-driven decision-making. Previously, she has worked to analyze and implement national healthcare policy at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). She is deeply committed to the idea that everyone deserves to live their happiest and healthiest life which begins, fundamentally, with access to affordable, quality healthcare.

Laura lives in – and adores – Richmond's east end. Outside of work, you're most likely to find her trying to keep the weeds in her yard at bay, hanging with her senior dog, floating in an ocean, hiking, or enjoying a meal al fresco.

I am passionate about serving on the Health Brigade board because Health Brigade has been, and continues to be, a cornerstone of our community. It's a privilege to support a group of people who walk the walk day in and day out with an unwavering commitment to standing up for the rights of all.



Welcoming New Staff



Andres Martinez is the new **Bilingual Registration Navigator** at Health Brigade. "I'm a proud father of a lively 3-year-old, happily married for a year to the love of my life. I've been a professional pet groomer and bartender for over 6 years—two roles I'm truly passionate about. At home, life's never dull with my cat and my French bulldog keeping things fun. Family, pets, and great cocktails pretty much sum me up!"



Volunteers Recognized in May 2025

Jenny Pak, PA-C, a primary care clinician in the Medical Clinic, won the May drawing! **Marianny De Aza**, Clinical Practice Administrator, shared, "Thank you so much for your time and all you do for our patients. Gracias!" Jenny is a new clinic volunteer and has hit the ground running!

Reed Baldwin
Dr. Minh Bui
Purav Desai
Carl Erickson, RN
Dr. Steve Farber
Dr. Katherine Laybourn
Josh Marett
Ginni McConnell

Jenny Pak
Bob Papas
Kelly Powell
Dr. Jeff Reihl
Sharmeen Sattar
Alice Strawn
Mary Lou Wassel

The Bucket Brigade was started by our Volunteer Program Manager Kelsea Jeter in 2021 to provide a process for staff to recognize outstanding volunteer service.

Food Farmacy in Session

In May, Health Brigade and Shalom Farms launched a six-month Produce Prescription Program, aka **Food Farmacy**, aimed at improving nutrition and health outcomes for Richmond residents with support from the USDA's GusNIP program.

Running from **May through October 2025**, the program offers weekly prescriptions of fresh, locally grown produce, along with culturally relevant nutrition education and biweekly cooking classes led by a community chef.

During the initial 12-week active phase, participants pick up produce at Health Brigade and engage in educational activities and check-ins with HB Clinical Practice Administrator **Marianny De Aza**, HB Community Health Worker **Emely Baez Salazar** and Shalom Farms Produce Rx Manager **My'kal Lofton**.

The following 12-week sustainability phase provides participants with vouchers redeemable at Shalom Farms' mobile markets. The program includes additional incentives such as gift cards for completing health screenings and is designed to empower participants to make lasting dietary changes and reduce healthcare reliance.

The program is fully bilingual with Spanish translation provided by Emely & Marianny. Families are encouraged to participate together, and children are welcome to join in all program activities.



L to R: HB Clinical Practice Administrator **Marianny De Aza**, HB Community Health Worker **Emely Baez Salazar** and Shalom Farms Produce Rx Manager **My'kal Lofton**



On Their Way...



HB Director of Health Outreach **Cristina Kincaid** embraces BSW '25 VCU Grad Sharon Tamayo at her graduation in May.

L to R: **Sharon Tamayo** (BSW '25 VCU Grad) and **Emily Park** (MSW '25 VCU Grad) were social work interns working in Health Outreach Department for the past year.



Where Are They Now?

Health Brigade—as well as Fan Free Clinic before it—has had a long history training volunteers to become the next generation of leaders in health care, mental health and social work. Starting in this issue, we will work to bring you stories of where some of these incredible individuals have landed in the world of service.

Medical Clinic



Jordan Dail
Medical Clinic Volunteer
2022 / 2024-2025
(Pictured with Sasha Poggi, HB
Medication Coordinator)

Jordan Dail, Medical Clinic Volunteer

"When I first started at VCU as an undergraduate, I was a pre-med student interested in pursuing medical school. Because I began during the COVID-19 pandemic, I lost a lot of opportunities to get involved and give back to the community. I knew I wanted to work with underserved populations, and I saw Health Brigade as a meaningful way to do that.

The most meaningful part of volunteering with Health Brigade was gaining a deeper understanding of what happens in people's lives outside of the clinical setting. I think education often falls short when it comes to showing the day-to-day realities of both healthcare

workers and the patients who rely on our system. Seeing that firsthand has shaped how I view healthcare and those who depend on it.

Health Brigade has had a major impact on my future goals. It has reinforced my desire to become a physician and helped solidify my commitment to community involvement. I want to continue working in underserved communities throughout my career so I can keep giving back to those who need it most.

I just finished my first year at **VCU Medical School**. I am interested in Internal medicine."

Social Work



Oltar Quintanilla, MSW, LCSW
Fall 2021 / Spring 2022

Oltar Quintanilla, MSW, LCSW Former Social Work intern

"My time as a student intern at Health Brigade was an emotional journey and one that was filled with frustration, hope, excitement, and growth. I began eager to learn about service delivery in a clinical setting and left with far more than I expected.

A standout part of my experience was my supervisor, **Jenee Johnson**. Her guidance made a lasting impact and she truly modeled what it means to be a professional social worker. Her knowledge and support during our supervisions continually inspired me and fueled my ambition to grow in the field. Last month, I achieved a major milestone by becoming a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), and I'm incredibly grateful to the entire Health Brigade team because I set this goal for myself during

my time as a student intern with Health Brigade.

I currently work as an outpatient counselor in private practice at **Healing Circle Counseling**, where I have been for the past 3 years. I support youth (ages 12 and up), families, and adults from across the life span as well as LGBTQIA +. My clients are those who are navigating stress, self-esteem challenges, trauma, grief, depression, anxiety, and major life transitions.

I would not be where I am today without the foundation I received at Health Brigade. The skills, guidance, and mentorship I gained as a student intern laid the groundwork for the clinician I've become. That experience not only shaped my career path but also deepened my commitment to showing up for others with compassion, knowledge, and purpose."

Cocktails for a Cause

Date: June 26, 2025
Time: at 5 PM- 7PM

QUIRK
HOTEL



The image shows the storefront of the Quirk store. A large, arched window with a black frame is topped by a striped awning. The awning has alternating light blue and white stripes. The store's name, "QUIRK", is displayed in large, black, serif capital letters on the glass. Above the name, "RICHMOND, VA" is written in a smaller, similar font. The interior is visible through the glass, showing a bright, modern space with a pink reception desk, a potted plant, and several people. A small potted plant with pink flowers sits on the sidewalk in front of the store.

Saturday, May 31, 2025

— WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

richmond.com • \$3

Officials: Free clinics are paying big price

DAY RESS
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Federal and state funding cuts, freezes and delayed payments are hammering Richmond's free clinics, the region's health care safety net, officials from the groups told a community town hall at Health Brigade's clinic near Scott's Addition.

The cuts, some of which date back to last year, have been particularly deep for services for prevention and treatment of HIV, the virus that can cause AIDS.

It also leaves people at risk to develop tuberculosis and other contagious disease.

Legato



Legato

Please see CLINICAL DATA.

Clinics

Brown A)

The cuts, freeze and show payments are pushing some decades-old Richmond institutions to the wall.

Health Brigade has won a \$1.64 million grant from federal anti-drug funding, said Karen Legato, executive director of Health Brigade, founded as the Free Clinic 55 years ago.

"In June of last year, we were notified that all of our HIV prevention money had been cut. We had several testing grants, those were cut," she said Thursday of some federal cuts.

The grant for Health Brigade's clean syringe program, which also distributes naloxone kits, medi-

Tatjana Krawinkel is seen speaking at the AIDS Memorial Walk in New York City. The AIDS Memorial Walk has seen a \$1.68 million increase in donations since 1990.

[illegible]

SHARP MANAGER **THE DOCTOR**
With Robert King, her medical case manager at Health Brigade, in 2013.
not in federal and state funding, said Karen Logan, executive director of

[illegible]

for badly needed work on its 73-year-old clinic building, including the roof and heating and air-conditioning systems.

Some of the money was to come from the Department of Housing, but "We were in the middle of negotiating the contract when we had gotten a call that DDCG had actually been reviewing it, and that's the end of that," she said, referring to the Department of Government Efficiency, which Elm Mas previously led.

Sens. Tim Kaine and Mark Warner had secured promises for more of the work, and "that was slated to go through and then the CR happened, and all that money disappeared," she said, referring to the "continuing resolution" short-term funding bill to keep the federal government from

"We're fortunate that we're in a location that has grown in value over the years," she said of the

"To a person, if you ask them what's their biggest concern, they will tell you it's their clients," they don't say anything about the money. It's about the clients and their patients. That's what it's about."

Dana Rees
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STAY INFORMED:
Sign up for our politics newsletter by emailing politics@greenendsofpatch.com or scan your smartphone camera at this code and saying:

You can listen to the entire HB Town Hall event like a podcast. Be sure to unmute the video to hear sound. To watch the HB Town Hall event, go to this Facebook link:

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1213907163281299>

On **May 31**, the Richmond Times-Dispatch ran an article about us on the front page. It covers our recent town hall and was written by staff writer Dave Ress. To read the entire article, go to this Richmond Times-Dispatch link: https://richmond.com/article_41201bc5-9078-54bf-8d01-1929d407e527.html