



NEAR WEST CLINIC LEARNING MEDICINE. SERVING INDIANAPOLIS.

Olivia Biddle, OMS-II

One idea shared by three medical students became the blueprint for a free clinic on the Near West Side of Indianapolis, where walk-ins are welcome, and no identification is required to receive care. Driven by the goal of making healthcare more accessible, the students from Marian University Tom and Julie Wood College of Osteopathic Medicine approached Dr. James Pike with a proposal to establish a student-run, volunteer-based free clinic. Their dream came to fruition in 2018 when Near West Free Clinic (NWFC) opened its doors. In the beginning, the clinic served a handful of patients, but it has since grown to provide care to over 30 patients each weekend. The clinic's growth reflects years of dedication from volunteer

clinicians, Marian medical students, Butler University physician assistant (PA) students, and local partners who work together to expand access to care.

To learn more about the clinic's evolution, I sat down with Kevin Bogenshutz, PA-C, who has been an integral part of the clinic's leadership board from the start. He graduated from Butler University's PA program and began his career in pulmonary medicine alongside Dr. Pike around the time the idea for NWFC was being developed. He later joined Butler's PA program as an instructor, combining his passion for patient care with his commitment to educating future healthcare providers.

WELCOME TO (Lf) livingfaith Church



Near West Free Clinic is Marian University Tom and Julie Wood College of Osteopathic Medicine's student-run free clinic, serving the near west side of Indianapolis, IN. In this section, you'll find an interview with one of the clinic's founding clinicians, Kevin Bogenschutz, PA-C, conducted by Olivia Biddle, OMS-II.

Following the interview, Anna Hazelrigg, OMS-II and Esther Zelenovskiy, OMS-II share their experiences serving on the clinic's student leadership board, offering readers an inside look at the impact of leading a student-run free clinic.

Pictured: Simran Sandhu, OMS-II, Olivia Biddle, OMS-II, Victoria Vicory, OMS-II and Pallavi Panchpor, OMS-II at the Near West Free clinic, Indianapolis, IN.





His commitment to serving others began much earlier. During his undergraduate career at the University of Dayton, Bogenshutz volunteered at a free clinic, an experience that, as he describes, served as an excellent model for NWFC. “I thought to myself, I would love to do that as soon as my career got going,” he recalls. “Ironically, and somewhat unbelievably, that opportunity presented itself rather quickly, and I was able to jump on it and become part of that team.” Bogenshutz joined the NWFC clinical leadership team with Dr. Pike, helping to turn an ambitious idea into a successful healthcare resource.

Bogenshutz recalled the many obstacles involved in building the free clinic from the ground up, including navigating legal requirements, finding a location, and building a reliable stock of resources, such as medications. NWFC operated out of the basement of a high school on the south side of Indianapolis before relocating to the Living Faith Church on the Near West Side. The move supported the clinic’s mission to expand access to care, bridge local care gaps, and connect with more individuals facing significant healthcare needs.

During the clinic’s early years, one of the greatest challenges was gaining patients’ trust. “This was an area of the city that probably has some hesitation toward the healthcare field, or maybe they had varying experiences [with healthcare],” Bogenshutz explained. He credits the student volunteers during the first few years and their commitment to patient outreach. Their efforts included canvassing neigh-

borhoods, distributing flyers, knocking on doors, and sending mailers to introduce residents to the clinic and its services. During this period, Bogenshutz also ensured that students who volunteered their time at the clinic gained valuable learning experiences, regardless of the number of patients who arrived. In preparation for a lower patient volume, he brought whiteboards to the clinic and guided students through clinical cases and problem-based learning exercises.

Bogenshutz reflected on what he considers some of the clinic’s most significant milestones: growing from seeing a few patients each weekend to consistently serving dozens of patients, as well as establishing a student board that meets with clinical leadership. For him, these moments represented the transformation of an idea into a sustainable source of care. “That was the first time we felt like a free clinic, like providing care.” Now, NWFC cares for more than 30 patients each week and continues to expand its services to meet the needs of the

neighbors it serves. The clinic also provides physical therapy and social work services each month, as well as more limited services, such as eye clinics and mammograms. Each addition is another step toward addressing the healthcare needs of individuals who otherwise might not be able to receive care.

Patient care is the highest priority at NWFC, not relative value units (RVUs) or other metrics that might be emphasized in a more traditional healthcare setting.

Patients return to the clinic because of the personalized care that both students and clinicians provide. “At the root, that is us. That is the Near West Free Clinic,” Bogenshutz exclaims. “I get more hugs at the Near West Free Clinic than I do at my regular clinic because the patients are just so genuinely happy to be cared for and the time that we take and the trust that we build with them.” The clinic’s model allows students to spend time with patients, listen to their concerns, and understand the circumstances that influence their health, an invaluable experience for future clinicians. Bogenshutz shared one of his favorite stories from the clinic as

“
And then, after a few years,
we had people who trusted us,
and they told their families
and friends, and then it grew
from there,” Bogenshutz said.

KEVIN BOGENSHUTZ, PA-C

an example of the collaborative environment that defines NWFC:

Because a first-year student felt empowered to advocate for the patient, the team was able to provide education about diabetes and how the patient could manage the condition. “It was a perfect example of how one student, who honestly was not very experienced at the time, but took the time to do a more thorough physical exam, speak up, get the extra tests, and spend the extra time to have the conversation about what diabetes is and not just say ‘Here’s metformin, see you later.’ I think that is a great example of what our clinic stands for,” Bogenshutz expressed. In the following months, the same patient returned to NWFC, bringing her friends with her.

Though the primary mission of NWFC is to serve individuals who otherwise lack access to healthcare, the clinic serves as an educational environment for future healthcare professionals. Students gain experience caring for patients with real medical conditions in a supportive, low-stress setting. Each weekend, 20 to 30 medical and PA students gather to set up the clinic at Living Faith church. During their didactic years, students begin their involvement at the clinic by working at the front desk, vitals stations, or serving as team aides. Students completing their clinical rotations return to serve as mentors for newer students, creating a cycle of learning and leadership. “It’s incredible, it’s one of the best things about being an attending at the clinic,” Bogenshutz explains. “You know, besides serving patients, this is our secondary mission – providing medical education.

Even at an early stage, you can see [students] pick up steam.” However, students do not need to have volunteered as a first-year student to serve. Students at NWFC take ownership of patient encounters from beginning to end, gathering histories, performing physical exams, and presenting cases to providers. Attending physicians and advanced

practice providers serve as mentors, ensuring appropriate care plans are developed, while allowing students to build confidence and clinical skills.

Looking ahead, Dr. Pike and Bogenshutz often return to one word when describing their goals for NWFC: sustainable. Preserving the clinic’s impact relies on the continued commitment of providers, students, and partners, which will ensure the clinic can continue to expand access to care while providing

meaningful educational opportunities for future healthcare professionals. Bogenshutz stated, “In five years, if you were to ask me what I hoped Near West looked like, I hope that there’s just as high engagement from our universities, healthcare centers, and the communities that appreciate the care we provide.”

“One afternoon, while a team was presenting a patient’s case to him, a hesitant first-year medical student spoke up, noting the hyperpigmentation on their patient’s neck. The patient was there for shoulder pain, but the student remembered that this physical finding could be associated with elevated glucose levels. Because of the available resources, the team decided to check the patient’s A1C, which came back as 13, indicating a significant need for intervention.”

