



in service

BY SHARON ELLIOTT-BYNUM, PHD, BSN, RN

In Service is a new column supporting the work of non-profit health organizations in the Triangle. To learn more, call (919) 967-6802.

CAARE's Legacy

Mark Twain said, "The best way to cheer yourself is to try to cheer someone else." This quote describes an organization that has worked hard and continues to work hard in the Durham community, cheering people in a lot of ways. This organization strives to bring *life* to the Durham community and add value holistically, physically, and mentally.

Sitting at our kitchen table years ago and discussing much needed health care for fellow Durhamites, my sister, Pat Amaechi (now deceased) and I lit a fire. One spark from that conversation ignited a much-loved and well-kept burning flame called Healing with CAARE, Inc.—a one-stop health care facility.

Out of that flame came the Jeanne Hopkins Lucas Education and Wellness Center. This center focuses on an integrative medical approach to healing, combining holistic, non-invasive, and mind-body-soul techniques with traditional clinical care. The Holistic Center offers acupuncture, EFT Tapping, and massage, as well as Reiki, mind-body-spirit, yoga, and meditation classes. There are also a variety of exercise and wellness classes and a free gym with a personal trainer twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

CAARE's free clinic focuses on the most severe health disparities in the Durham County area: HIV/AIDS, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and cancer. The clinic is staffed by volunteer health care professionals offering a variety of services—including free clinical breast exams, PAP smears, prostate and colorectal exams—and makes referrals for free mammograms, MRIs, and biopsies through their partnerships.

CAARE takes pride in its ability to connect with the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations in the Durham community—whose numbers are staggering and continue to rise.

CAARE's model was built on an understanding of the social determinants of health; three of these important determinants are poverty, education level, and housing. For example, people in poverty are more likely to engage in risky health behaviors, and they are less likely to have affordable housing. In turn families with difficulties in paying rent and utilities are more likely to report barriers to accessing health care.

Because we understand the multiple factors that affect health care, CAARE's health clinic offers a very wide variety of services—all of which contribute to health. These include: HIV/AIDS and Substance Abuse counseling and support groups, case management, HIV prevention and education classes, cooking classes, job readiness classes, job link, GED classes, Spanish classes, substance abuse treatment, mental health, computer lab, food pantry, and a medical and dental clinic. Annually CAARE conducts turkey give-a-ways at Thanksgiving and a Christmas coat-and-toy drive for needy families. CAARE also conducts various health fairs and educational sessions at its Broadway Street location and throughout the community. Did we mention all of these services are "FREE?"


HELPING HOMELESS VETERANS

Durham has some 15,489 veterans in the area, and they are among the populations that CAARE serves. In 2001, CAARE opened its first Transitional House for Homeless Veterans. We successfully took our very first Veteran from homelessness to home ownership by wrapping our many services around him. With this success CAARE has since opened two additional transitional houses. The three houses serve nine veterans at a time.

Due to the growing need for housing and other supportive services, CAARE is in the process of completing a 15-bed dormitory in the basement area of its location at 214 Broadway Street, Durham. Initial funding was provided by the VA. These funds were instrumental in getting the project underway. However, due to the rising costs in our current economy, CAARE has had to seek additional funds to complete this project. The project is approximately 90 percent complete at this time!

There have been many stories of volunteers coming together to complete the work. Recently we had a local version of an extreme makeover "Durham Edition." Employees from Home Depot and CET trainees came together that day to complete services that included painting, flooring, bathroom installation, and gardening. What a wonderful display of teamwork and goodwill!

Along with others, I've been working around the clock to secure the remaining funds to install a utility line so that the final tests can be performed. This has been an amazing journey of faith, hope and perseverance. Giving up has never been an option. On any given day, you may find me walking around the project site with a broom in hand, trying to tidy up the place while giving a tour. As long as I am able to accomplish something during the course of the day I feel as though we are moving closer toward our goal of completion. Clearly, this project continues to be one of my greatest challenges as CAARE's Executive Director, and I gain strength in the sure knowledge that my sister Pat is supporting us every step of the way. I remain true to my vow to follow Gandhi's advice and be the change I want to see in the world.

If you can help us help homeless veterans, please call (919) 683-5300, or email us at sellbyn919@aol.com. 

Since 1972, Dr. Elliott-Bynum has been professionally involved in an extensive number of leadership experiences in nursing, and many aspects of health education and prevention. She co-founded CAARE, Inc., in 1995. CAARE may be contacted at 214 Broadway Street, Durham, NC. Telephone: (919) 683-5300; Email: sellbyn919@aol.com