

Community Medical Clinic of Aiken County

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Community Medical Clinic of Aiken County



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NEW BEGINNINGS



Welcome back to our newsletter! I am Libby and this is where I get to share healthcare tips with our readers.

Last month we celebrated one of the national health observances related to women's health, Women's Eye Health. Sadly, most of the world's population of blind and visually impaired persons are women. According to the National Eye Institute this is because women live longer than men. And women are affected by hormonal factors due to pregnancy and menopause.

Now everyone knows that if you are having problems seeing, you go to the eye doctor, either an ophthalmologist or optometrist. You get an eye examination, and you get glasses. Sounds simple, but our patients face two problems. First, they cannot afford either the eye exam or the glasses. The cost can be close to \$100.00 for the examination and the glasses can be as much as \$200.00 or more.

Second there are eye problems that require more than glasses for treatment. While most cases of blindness and visual impairment are preventable or treatable; these patients need early diagnosis and timely treatment. They often cannot afford to see someone to even find out why they are having trouble seeing. But sadly, this problem is not just here in Aiken County; according to the CDC, 93 million US adults have elevated risk for vision loss and only half saw an eye doctor in the past 12

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Orion Jeter, left, has been named the new executive director and Melanie Phillips is the new operations manager.

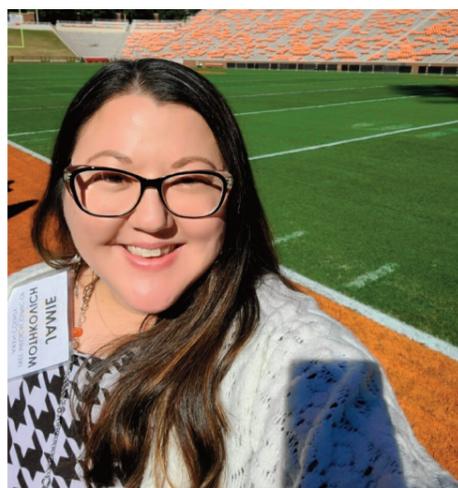
Mothkovich reflects on time at the clinic, Jeter discusses hopes, plans for the future

As Executive Director Jamie Mothkovich prepared to leave the Community Medical Clinic of Aiken County for the last time on May 6, she reflected on the past nine years and how far the clinic has come since then. She first started as a pharmacy tech part-time before signing on full-time and eventually becoming director.

The director before Mothkovich, Mallory Holley encouraged her to apply for the position of director after she left in March of 2016. Holley thought she was a good candidate for the role due to her knowledge of many of the processes at the clinic and thought it would be a smooth transition.

As director for six years, she got to see many patients pass through the clinic. She saw them at the lowest and at their highest.

"Some of my favorite moments are seeing the successes of our patients when I know they work so hard or they've been battling their diseases - their high blood pressures, their sugars, and just seeing it all click for them and coming full circle and making sense that their health care plan will work if they



Jamie Mothkovich left the clinic as executive director for a position at Augusta University.

actually take part in it - that has been so amazing. Being able to celebrate them and also having the ability to be part of the jour-

ney even when things weren't going great for them. Being able to hug them and cry with them when they needed it," Mothkovich said. "Another favorite moment was when we got the team that we have now. It was a lot of ups and downs getting to that point but when I finally found my team it was so amazing, and by far my most favorite time here at the clinic was getting the team that we have now. And I think the second close behind that would be getting the 2019 Secretary of State Angel Award. It was just a high honor and I was so thrilled for the clinic and for the team. It just really put us on the map and it showed everyone the hard work that we do here."

The angel award was a big accomplishment. To be eligible for that award, the organization had to exist for at least three years and has to devote 80 percent or more of its total expenditures to charitable programs. Mothkovich attributes another big accomplishment to the implementation of the R.I.S.E. program and hiring Orion Jeter as the program

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Nurse practitioner wishes Mothkovich fond farewell as she pursues new role



Elizabeth Seal

Nurse Practitioner

I want to share with you some news, our executive director, Jamie Mothkovich, is moving on to a new position. We are proud to see that another organization recognizes her rare abilities but sad for our loss. She has truly grown into a remarkable and talented woman who will be joining Augusta University as director of their Patient Outreach Program.

My initial reaction was one of sadness for our loss but then happiness that she has an opportunity to use her incredible skills to reach others in our community. I remember when she first started in the pharmacy as a technician. She was the one who taught me that compliance involves taking the medications not just writing the prescription. She showed

me that the reasons why the blood pressure was still high despite the ordered medications. Either the patient hadn't picked them up or they didn't have their paperwork completed to qualify for free medications from Welvista.

She continued to explore barriers to health by bringing in Orion who developed the R.I.S.E. program. She nurtured and trained our staff and today I believe we have an incredible team. She increased our grant funding a hundred-fold. And she became very creative at fund raising during a pandemic. Most of all she provided support for me so I could

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The clinic needs your help to reach our fundraising goal!

Goal: \$450000



CLINIC RECEIVES \$4,000 GRANT FROM WOMEN UNITED AT GALA ON MAY 13



The David Belk-Cannon Foundation gave the grant and named it after Harriett Jackson, a longtime board member of the United Way. Orion Jeter attended the event. The grant will fund the HER Story program, which will focus on self care for women.

Director

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director.

The R.I.S.E. program has been a game changer for the clinic and for our patients. If I was asked to do one thing and only one thing out of all of the things I've done at the clinic that would be the one I would pick because the R.I.S.E. program is going to do so much more for our patients than we can ever do," she said.

On her decision to leave to pursue a job at Augusta University, Mothkovich said it was never on her radar.

"Leaving was never a thing for me. I thought I was going to grow old and die working at the clinic. But I got an amazing opportunity at Augusta University. It wasn't only an amazing opportunity for myself, but for my family. After a lot of prayer, I came to the (conclusion) that it was time and I needed to move out of the way to make room for the next leader at the clinic. Ultimately, my final decision maker was I knew that if Orion and Melanie would be able to step up into their new roles, the clinic would be in great hands and that me getting out of the way would actually kind of catapult that into motion but also it was just time," she said. "I don't think you guys will even notice I'm gone. That's how great the leadership is here. Orion as the new director is going to take this position and run with it. He thinks on his feet, he's creative, he's passionate, he's genuine in his passion and sincerity for the love of this community and the people in the clinic. And Melanie is just amazing. She loves the clinic, she loves our patients. She's a great team player and she kept me sane for all these years and I know she'll do the same for Orion. But she's also our calming force in this clinic. She's our peacemaker and really just keeps things going smoothly. I'm excited for the leadership now and I'm excited to see what you guys are going to do. And I think the community is going to get excited. I really feel that not only will the clinic just flourish under the new leadership but the patients are going to really benefit under the new leadership as

well."

While she will miss the team at the clinic as well as the patients, she wants the board to know just how much she appreciates being given the opportunity to develop in her leadership.

"Just want to thank the board for all their support. As me coming into this role as new director with no experience. They really just mentored me and showed me what a leader is and allowed me to develop my own leadership style and I'm so grateful for that. I'm grateful for my team. I'm grateful for the volunteers. The time I've had here these nine years have been just - it feels like a blur - but it's been so much fun. You know they say time flies when you're having fun. I must be having a blast because it feels like only a day, but I just want to thank everyone that I've had the honor and privilege of working with over these past years and I'll never forget my time at the clinic," Mothkovich said.

Jeter, who has been with the clinic for three years, has stepped in as the new executive director. He first grew a relationship with the clinic through the SCSEP program for older workers at Goodwill. He set the clinic up as a training site to bring on trainees from the program.

"I just had a taste of what the clinic had to offer and how much good it was doing and how good it was for the trainees for that program and I just wanted to be involved even more. So I met with our executive director Jamie Mothkovich and discussed her vision and our combined vision for a new program and that's how I got started as our program director," Jeter said.

While he has taken on new responsibilities, Jeter says the R.I.S.E. program isn't going anywhere. If anything, it'll only get bigger.

"We're definitely going to expand the reach of the R.I.S.E. program. I want to expand the reach of who we serve in general. There are so many people who are without medical insurance, without a medical home and they just don't know about us. That's one of the main things we need to do. To make sure those people find us. But I just really think that the R.I.S.E. program is a way that can change the game in

not being a bandaid but being the surgery needed to correct the issue that people have. The challenges that people have and face in their life and getting them from just surviving to thriving," Jeter said.

Not only does he have big plans for the clinic in the local community, but also across South Carolina.

"I envision audaciously that our goal should be that the R.I.S.E. program not just be a local thing. We're going to try our best to perfect it locally because it's the home, it's the incubator. But I think that we can create a model of success in growing people into the beautiful flowers that they can be. That can be replicated in our beautiful state of South Carolina and beyond. I don't think we can limit it, but we're going to take it one person, one unique individual at a time. And I think that when we concentrate on it like that, it'll grow in a very organic way and we can make it whatever it needs to become to affect the people it needs to affect," Jeter said.

Stepping into any new role can have its challenges with new responsibilities and learning new skills. That's why the community's support is so important to help the clinic in continuing to provide the services it does.

"I'm most excited just building on the wealth of resources and value that the clinic already provides to the community - the legacy of caring that's already established. Just building on that foundation and making it even more so a gem in the community. Also look forward to trying to make sure more of our community, more of our county knows just what we do. Knows that we exist. Just increasing our visibility and impact in the community. Just coming up with new creative ways to be able to help people to rise," he said. "We need our community involved. We need our community to be able to undertake the things we are capable of doing together. It's a team effort. When we make it a community and a team, there is nothing that can stop us. I do believe that we are going to be able to accomplish that for the people that need it and we'll get a stronger community for many years on down the line."

Corner

From Pg. 1

months.

Problems that are going undiagnosed and untreated include cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration. Cataracts are when the lens in the eye becomes cloudy, this the leading cause of vision loss in the United States. Diabetic retinopathy occurs when diabetes causes damage to blood vessels in the back of the eye, which is the biggest cause of blindness in American adults. Glaucoma is a disease that damages the optic nerve which provides the signals to the brain to see. And sometimes as the eye ages there is a gradual breakdown of light-sensitive tissue in the eye which is age-related macular degeneration. Diseases like glaucoma respond to medications while cataracts and retinal damage require more expensive treatments and surgical procedures.

The Lion's Club and Christ Central have been options for getting an examination and glasses; but the funding is limited with long waiting lists. The South Carolina Commission for the Blind's Prevention of Blindness Program is there for South Carolinians who cannot afford to take care of their vision. While they do provide eye exams, eyeglasses, cataract surgeries and retinal detachment surgeries; again, the waiting list is long for prescribed treatments.

Palmetto Retina Center in West Columbia has collaborated with patients who have retinal disease and with fees that start at \$200.00 to evaluate and work on a treatment plan with future costs to be determined.

Our Aiken community partner, Dr. Gratham has retired and that leaves us with a huge unmet need. He had partnered with us over the years to help provide care to selected patients. With his assistance I was able to determine which patients to send for more advanced treatment in-

cluding retinal surgery. We need another kind heart who would be willing to help our community. We at the clinic can assist you in an opportunity to change the health of your neighbors. It takes a village to care for our population.

Because when I challenge those to help others, I also challenge myself to see what we can do and we have decided to offer a visual screening day at the clinic and not just for Women, we will include Men, too. On that day, patient will have an eye screening with the Acuity Chart and we will provide a list of providers we suggest that they should see.

So, you ask me what can you do to prevent eye disease? Well, if you have been reading these newsletters you know I am going to talk about food. First eating a healthy diet is important. You've might have heard that carrots are good for your eyes. Its simpler than that, eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables are key to keeping your eyes healthy. Try adding dark leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, or collard greens and fish which is high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, and halibut. Do not purchase extra vitamins, first get what you need in the food you eat.

Keep your diabetes under control by following the ABCs of Diabetes, controlling sugars, blood pressure and cholesterol levels and be sure to discuss your goals with your healthcare provider.

Do not smoke or quit smoking. Smoking significantly increases the risk for certain diseases. Do not forget to wear sunglasses with UV protection. Our South Carolina sun is brutal and protecting your eyes from the sun can help the progression of cataracts.

If you have been reading these newsletters, you can see I am adding to my theme of improving your health by eating healthy and quitting smoking. This will not only improve your heart health and the health of your colon but now we are adding the improved health of your eyes.

Seal

From Pg. 1

focus on patients and how to meet the needs of the uninsured.

Sometimes in my life I have been fortunate to know people that I felt would grow beyond their role and become capable of great things. When I worked at Emory doing medical research; a young medical resident who I grew cells for seemed to stand above the rest. Today he is director of a kidney transplant program in Texas. And this has happened again, Jamie has grown; and her talents and skills show she is capable of greater challenges than we offer.

When Mallory (Holley), the first director I worked with left, at first, I was worried about the future. The job of executive director is a demanding role and

the skills needed are unique. Jamie quickly showed me that she was the right person for the job. And as time went on, I realized that I could trust her judgment. Over the years our relationship developed such that we both understood our roles and our hopes for the clinic were one and the same.

I am not worried about this next transition. The staff that Jamie has hired and fostered are ready for new challenges. Orion Jeter and Melanie Herbold will be our new leadership team and I hope that everyone will welcome them as they add additional responsibilities. Under Jamie's tutelage they will certainly be capable of performing as our joint directors. Each brings their unique talents to the table. So please join me in saying a fond farewell to Jamie and welcome Orion and Melanie to their new expanded positions.