



Director's Message

In 1859, Charles Dickens wrote and published *A Tale of Two Cities*, a novel set 250 years ago, between 1775 and 1792. It is a story of two characters navigating the tumultuous political climate of London and Paris. It begins:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of Hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us..."

I haven't been able to get this passage out of my mind as I've been thinking about my message for this report. Being insightful, sage, and succinct in a paragraph or two is always challenging at best, daunting at worst. I typically ruminate, procrastinate, read other people's annual reports for inspiration, and ultimately arrive at a focused message that shares the successes and challenges of our prior year. Indeed, we ushered out 2024 on many high notes. But recently I have been distracted... at times, consumed.

I have had the good fortune to work for nonprofits in my local community throughout my professional career, from Washington, D.C., to southeastern Kentucky, to here in Middlebury, Vermont. Facing unknowns in nonprofits is typical; but this year feels fundamentally different. On good days I find it unsettling; on bad days scary and unnerving.

What will become of our patients? Our unique populations? All those who Melanie has helped enroll in insurances whose eligibility requirements may drastically change? What will become of our funding sources that are threatened with termination? What of Vermont's Coalition of Free Clinics – the network of eight safety net healthcare clinics that collectively serve nearly 13,000 people a year? I feel like the rug I've been standing on over the arc of my 40-year career is slowly being pulled out from beneath my feet, and all that I've relied on to remain hopeful, assuage myself and lead my staff is being challenged and tested like never before.

Yet, there are things I do know. I know our staff, board and volunteers have doubled down and recommitted themselves to our work and a mission that hasn't changed in 34 years. I know our coalition of free clinics met two weeks ago and created a strategic plan framework that looks very different from how I thought it might four months ago. I know many groups of incredibly capable and caring people in our community have met to see how they can help and support us. I know that a donor and clinic champion called two weeks ago and asked how we are doing and if we need help. I know everyone deserves access to healthcare; and I know we are an integral member of our local healthcare delivery system and can provide some of that needed care. These knowns ground me, comfort me, and motivate me to move forward. History does repeat itself, and today, I choose to think it is the season of Light and it will be the spring of Hope.

Thank you for your steadfast and tremendous support of our work. May 2025 be filled with good health, hope and humanity.

Best,
Heidi

Meeting an urgent insurance need

Vanessa had been in an abusive relationship until she finally found the courage to flee to Vermont with her two children. Her plan to live with her brother until she could get on her feet quickly changed when her brother was pulled over and arrested while bringing the family to his house. Not knowing what to do, Vanessa and her two children began sleeping in her brother's car, hoping he would soon be released. Noticing this, a resident contacted Child Protective Services, who tracked Vanessa down at a local business. Caught in a negative trajectory, Vanessa's luck changed dramatically when a community member overheard the exchange and offered to house the family and work with Vanessa to ensure she adhered to DCF's requirements.

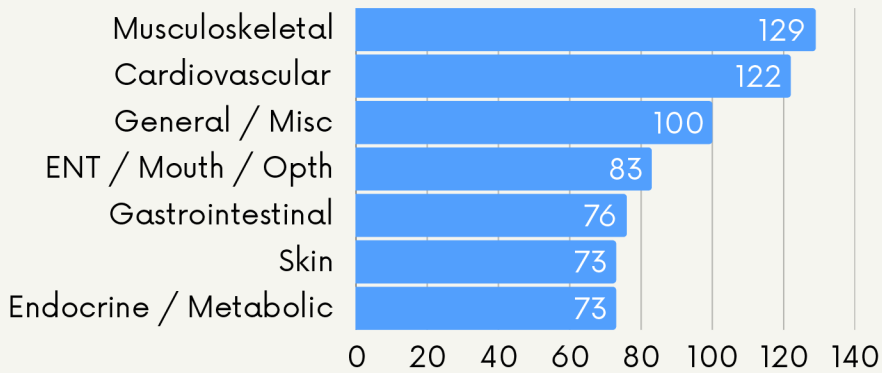
Vanessa enrolled her two children in school as directed, but her son was too ill to attend. Vanessa hesitated to bring him to Urgent Care because she didn't know how she would pay for the visit. Desperate to find a way to have her son seen by a provider, not only to help him feel better, but also to prove to Child Protective Services that he had a legitimate reason for missing school, Vanessa ended up at our office. ODC's Vermont Health Connect Certified Application Counselor, Melanie Clark, worked with Vanessa to complete a VHC application and get her children enrolled in Dr. Dynasaur. Knowing Vanessa's son required immediate medical attention, Melanie advised her to bring him right to Urgent Care, and requested that Vermont Health Connect process an Access to Care so prescriptions could be picked up the same day. In a time of extreme uncertainty, Vanessa was grateful to know with 100% certainty that her son would be able to get the medical attention he needed, the bill would be covered by insurance, and she would be able to stay on track with Child Protective Services by providing the doctor's note they required while he recovered.

ODC is grateful to be part of a community and state that welcomes the stranger and honors the courage of those who leave abusive situations. Within that matrix of support, ODC can focus its contribution: to connect our patients with the medical and health resources they need to move from fear and uncertainty toward relief and stability.

2024 By the Numbers

Top Patient Diagnoses

● Unique Patients Seen in Cli...



1,309

unique patients served



546

patients were new to ODC

743

patients seen by a medical provider

161

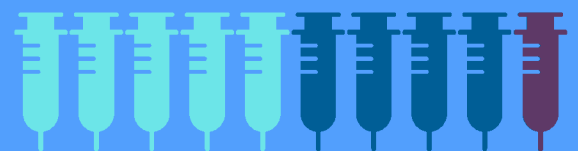
patients seen by a dental provider

311

patients received insurance assistance

578

vaccines administered,



including 307 flu vaccines, 184 Covid boosters, and 82 T-dap (Tentanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis) vaccines

The Value of Partnerships

The scope and scale of the Open Door Clinic's practice is enabled by a close partnership with UVM Health Network's Porter Hospital. Porter donates our administrative and clinic space, and offers ODC patients vouchers for laboratory and radiology tests, including X-rays and mammograms. Those tests inform ODC's nurse case managers' preventative, diagnostic, and chronic care, decreasing costly, unnecessary emergency room visits and hospitalizations. We direct uninsured patients to Melanie Clark, our Certified Vermont Health Connect (VHC) Assister, to find the best possible coverage, and permanent primary care homes. When we refer patients to specialists, we provide case management, scheduling assistance, and volunteer medical interpreters to facilitate clear communication, if needed. And we help our patients to apply for Porter and UVMHC patient financial assistance, when needed.

In 2024, we served patients from all 22 towns in Addison County. We made 393 specialist referrals, and made 604 referrals for laboratory testing. 743 patients saw a volunteer medical provider. In fact, except for our nurse case managers, volunteers provide all medical care at ODC. In 2024, ODC held 107 medical clinics, supported by 14 MDs and DOs, 4 NPs, 12 RNs, 4 PTs, 5 medical students, and 1 registered dietician. Patients also received support from 2 mental health providers, and 39 medical interpreters. ODC's work was further supported by 12 volunteer board members, including Medical and Dental Directors Linn Larson, MD and Adam Fasoli, DMD. Another 24 administrative volunteers working with us in the office and on our website.

We also held 43 dental clinics, seeing 161 patients in collaboration with Middlebury Dental Group (MDG), University of New England's extern program, and newly, with UVMHC's dental residency program. ODC's dental program worked with 5 dentists, 4 hygienists & dental assistants, and 3 dental students this year, primarily at MDG, and with Bristol Park Dental, Dr. Congalton, Dr. Audra Pinto, and Associates in Orthodontics.

How did this year compare to previous years? In 2024, (see below), while we continue to deepen our partnerships with area social service agencies, we referred fewer patients to social services than in recent pandemic years, due in part to the work of UVM Clinical Social Work intern Fiona Galan Reinhold, who counsels our patients. We also referred fewer patients to outside dentists, in part because, for the first time, UVM dental residents hosted by Middlebury Dental Group provided more than 100 hours of service to ODC patients. Patients' more complex and chronic needs warranted more visits to UVM Porter Hospital laboratory and radiology, as well as other specialists. Middlebury Eye Associates continued to provide essential care.

Finally, our insurance navigator, Melanie Clark advised, followed up with, and enrolled hundreds of patients from across the county, at all income levels - in Medicaid and VHC insurance plans (see below right); earning well-deserved praise (at left).

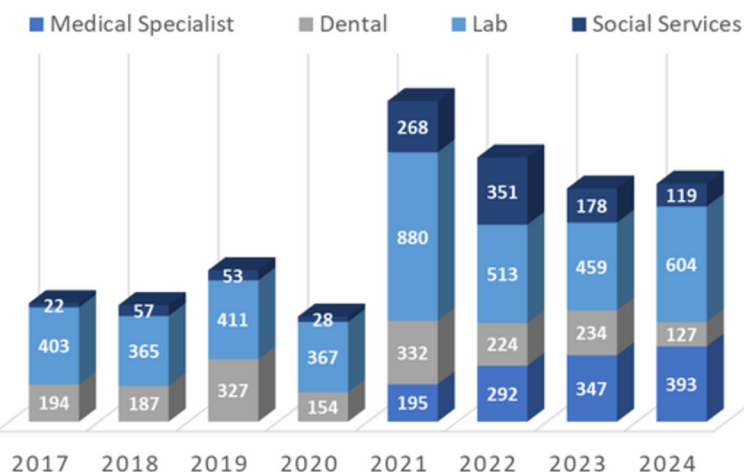
In 2024, ODC received more than
\$525,700
 in donations in-kind

129
 Volunteers contributed
2,985
 hours, an in-kind value of
\$211,737

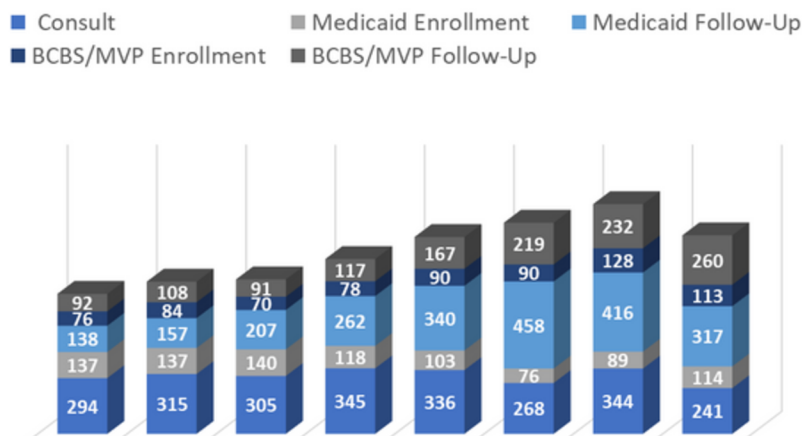
"Thank you so much for all your help assisting me with VT Health Connect and navigating through the enrollment process these last 3 years. I never could have gotten through it without your help. You are fantastic at what you do!" - J.M.M.

"You make things more understandable in this crazy, confusing system. Thank you again... we really appreciate it!" - K.P.

ODC REFERRALS BY CATEGORY



VERMONT HEALTH CONNECT SERVICES





Victor

We asked outgoing Patient Services Coordinator Victor Castro to reflect on his time with ODC. He shared that he loved "seeing patients' realities and getting involved in their lives." He particularly enjoyed helping people apply for financial assistance from the hospital: "Afterwards, when it was approved, it was nice to see their faces and expressions knowing that... they didn't have to worry about paying large debts.... I know it sounds like something simple, but it's not."

Victor plans to continue his commitment to help as many people as possible by serving his new community in Madison, Wisconsin, where he and his family realized their dream of homeownership near extended family. He says of his new job at a hospital there, "we will see if there is as much camaraderie as at ODC!"

Victor concluded with a shout-out to ODC volunteers. "I loved working with them because they are people who are always at the service of the community. I feel that they are people with a big heart.... Despite the cancellations sometimes, they were always patient."

We miss Victor, and will strive to carry forward his spirit of enthusiasm for our patients, life, and his passion for good cooking. ¡Qué la vida le siga entregando delicias, Victor!

Staff Highlights



Lillian

We are delighted to welcome Lillian Prime to the role of Patient Services Coordinator. She began part-time at ODC in January 2025, graduated Middlebury College in February, and started full-time with us on February 17th!

Lillian served as our 2024 Middlebury College summer intern. Warm, thoughtful and unflappable, Lillian worked so well with ODC staff and patients that we are thrilled to have her officially join the team. You might encounter her coordinating appointments and hospital financial aid applications, responding by phone and WhatsApp to with patients and volunteers, or even interpreting for a birth.

We will never forget the rowing day last summer at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Ferrisburgh. Lillian recruited patients to participate—then served as bilingual coxswain for the boat!

At Middlebury, Lillian studied environmental justice, Spanish, and little bit of Portuguese. She writes, "I started volunteering at the clinic in January of 2024 and have loved getting to meet all the wonderful patients and staff. ODC's mission to make healthcare more accessible is so important to me: I am inspired by the community at the clinic. I look forward to continuing to work with and learn from everyone!"

Sources and Uses

