

December, 2008

Dear Friends,

For the patients at Columbia Road Health Services, difficult choices between health care or shelter and food for their family are not new. These are hard economic times for many families, but for those already living on or below the margin of poverty there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel. Yet, through the work of the medical teams, counselors, case managers and administrative staff at Columbia Road Health Services and the generous assistance from our friends who support the mission, there is hope. There is light.

Columbia Road Health Services (CRHS) has been that beacon of light for many families, but one recent patient experience stands out. Pedro, his wife Leora and their daughter Andra were in dire straights. Although Pedro worked full-time, his employer did not offer health insurance and Pedro could not afford the premium on his own. When Andra developed a fever, Pedro and Leora immediately took her to a local emergency room. However, they left without being seen. The cost of the visit was too high. They simply did not see any other options. Then a family friend, who is a CRHS patient, told them we would provide medical care regardless of ability to pay.

Andra was immediately seen by a CRHS physician and given medication. Her condition improved. At CRHS, we take a holistic approach to medical services. The physician did not simply “fix” one problem and send the family home. Andra was also behind on her immunizations and the physician was able to update her so she is on schedule for her age group. CRHS has case managers on-site who are able to assist patients like Pedro and his family to navigate the complex system of available insurance.



*CRHS is committed to providing for all community members, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay.*

As I write, I know there are similar stories of families all over the DC metropolitan area. I could substitute Pedro, Leora and Andra with John, Susan and Robert. I can substitute Pedro’s family for a grandmother with diabetes who cares for her grandchildren and can not afford the medication she needs on a fixed income. Each one of these stories needs a point of light, a place where their conditions are understood and their circumstances are accepted.

At CRHS, we hope that the overall barriers to health care will one day be removed for everyone. Until then, we will foster our own hope by being a light for those most in need. This time of Advent is filled with new possibilities as Christmas bares witness to hope and renewal. Through your generous support, that hope and renewal will continue past this season and fill the New Year with a continued sense of well-being. On behalf of all the staff and patients at Columbia Road Health Services, thank you for adding your light to ours.

Sincerely,

*Janelle*

Dr. Janelle Goetcheus