THE PATIENT'S NAVIGATOR

Fall 2025

A PROGRAM OF

Access Now

Richmond Academy of Medicine 1820

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To support Access Now in its essential mission, please click the button below:

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*Total number of patients seen since **Access Now** began:*
24,924

Total current number of specialty-care provider volunteers:
1,187

*Total reported value of donated care since **Access Now** began:*
$79,642,825.37

Statistics are current through October 31, 2025.

Safety-Net Funding Cuts Raise Demand for Specialist Volunteers

Access Now and the patients it serves are incredibly thankful for each and every moment our nearly **1,200 physician volunteers** carve from their busy schedules, as well as their awe-inspiring gift of life-changing medical treatments performed *pro bono*.

So many have given so much; it's not easy to ask even more of them. That's why, if you or someone you know is a healthcare provider willing to lend a hand, we want to hear from you! Please contact Sue Speese at sspeese@ramdocs.org or call 804-622-8134 if you wish to learn more about our program and how to become an invaluable part of a priceless charitable mission!

WHY WE NEED YOU

The cost of living continues to rise: Groceries, gasoline, and so many other essential products cost more and more, cutting further into the means of many Central Virginians and driving more into the healthcare safety net. The unemployed, uninsured and underinsured are having a tougher time obtaining vital care than ever before.

Recently passed cuts to Medicaid will only increase the demand for safety-net clinics care here, spilling over into all facets of health care and further straining an already overloaded system.

Access Now is as dedicated to its mission as ever, but in order to succeed, we absolutely need even more generous physician volunteers who are willing to lend their expertise in helping our most vulnerable neighbors.

👉 Click Here to Volunteer!

Meet Our Board: Karen Legato, MPS, MSW

Few if any health care advocates in the RVA region can match the passion and dedication to health care access for society's most vulnerable exhibited by **Karen Legato, MPS, MSW**, the Executive Director of **Health Brigade** and a member of **Access Now's Board of Directors**.

With 30+ years served in the nonprofit sector in such fields as medical social work, administration, child and family work, education, program development, project management, facilitation, public speaking and community coalitions and partnership work, Karen boasts a skillset and level of experience that makes her an invaluable asset to her community.

What are her thoughts on Access Now and its mission to deliver free specialty care to the uninsured? We reached out to her to get her take on the important work our organizations do every day.

Can you tell our readers a little about the relationship between Access Now and Health Brigade?

Health Brigade, formerly Fan Free Clinic (first free clinic in Virginia incorporated in 1970), provides medical care, mental health, and public health outreach services to uninsured and underinsured adults living in the greater Richmond metropolitan region. Health Brigade has partnered with Access Now since its inception as a program of the Richmond Academy of Medicine in 2008. Since that time, Health Brigade has made over 10,000 referrals for specialty care valued at over $11 million donated charges from participating volunteer physicians. As a safety net provider in the Richmond region, Health Brigade and the many other community clinics serving those who are uninsured would not be able to offer their patients' continuity to care without the specialty services provided by Access Now.

As we face serious cuts to Medicaid and other safety-net programs, what are your thoughts about Access Now's and Health Brigade's roles in the community? Has Health Brigade seen an increase in patient need?

Medicaid and ACA tax credits are facing devastating cuts from the Federal government. The impact of these cuts will be most harmful to low-income residents of all ages as well as to those who purchase

insurance on the exchange, which expands across all income levels. Every health care system, including public health has and will experience resource losses, while all of us living in the U.S. will pay more for insurance and health care delivery.

The disruption requires community clinics like Health Brigade and Access Now to serve more people at a time when funding is already difficult to maintain for the current level of services. Many people will go without care and likely utilize expensive emergency care and specialty care for conditions that could have been prevented or managed in primary care. It is expected that our communities will become sicker as those living with chronic illness and communicable diseases, such as HIV, have already lost nearly all their services that assisted them with remaining in treatment, such as case management, housing, emergency assistance, mental health, substance use, and dental services. Medical services have also been severely cut for this population.

The need for the health safety net is more critical than ever, yet the system has become more fragile from the federal and state cuts steadily gutting it. Health Brigade, Access Now, and other community clinics and health organizations must be a leading voice right now in helping the larger community understand the impact that is already upon the safety net and vulnerable populations across the Commonwealth. People have a right to know and understand what is happening to them and become active in advocating for policies that put people first over profit. Physicians and other care providers need to know the impact health policy has over their decisions to care or deny care to patients. They too must find their voice.

How has serving on the Access Now board augmented your views on safety-net specialty care?

Serving on the Access Now board has given me a broader view of the scope of services, generosity of hundreds of providers and practices, and the impact on the greater Richmond community. It is outstanding to see the number of vulnerable residents served across so many specialties and the healing that takes place for so many. The services are truly lifesaving. Free and Charitable Clinics like Health Brigade could not practice primary care without the availability of specialty care provided through the network of Access Now. As resources become scarcer in the medical space, and the demand increases for specialty care services driven by additional volume at the clinic level, I trust the leadership and Board to stay dedicated, creative, and resolved to meet the growing needs of the community.

What would you tell a physician or practice considering volunteering with Access Now?

If you are a physician or medical practice in the community, I urge you to consider volunteering your specialty care for those who have no other options to access the care they need. Access Now staff does a great job of coordinating the services to make it seamless for you as a provider to see patients in your own practice site. You can make a difference literally between life and death for so many of our vulnerable neighbors. In addition to the personal and professional satisfaction of giving to the community, your practice also receives a tax write-off for donated services.

Is there anything you would like Access Now's past, present and future patients to know?

If you have ever been a patient of Access Now, you know the generosity and the quality of the care you received. You are often able to receive your specialty appointments sooner than you would receive them if you were navigating services with insurance. This often occurs because those working in community non-profit clinics and at Access Now are so committed to reducing barriers for you with the referral, tracking and follow through to ensure you get the care you need. The model of care through safety net partners with Access Now, truly is centered on you as a patient and we often hear how deeply grateful you are for the services.

Help Others AND Help Yourself:
Volunteer to Earn Up to 15 Type 2 CME Credits

Did you know that volunteer providers can earn 1 hour CME credit for 1 hour of volunteering, up to 15 credits to fulfill the 30 Type 2 CME credits they need?

Up to 15 of the Type 2 continuing education hours may be satisfied through delivery of services, without compensation, to low-income individuals receiving services through a local health department or a free clinic organized in whole or primarily for the delivery of health services. One hour of continuing education may be credited for one hour of providing such volunteer services. For the purpose of continuing education credit for

voluntary service, documentation by the health department or free clinic shall be acceptable.

👉 Learn More!

WHY Does Access Now Partner with Hitting Cancer Below the Belt?

At our 2024 collaborative **Free Colonoscopy Day**, Access Now and **Hitting Cancer Below the Belt** (**HCB2**) achieved:

- **14 out of 15** scheduled patients arriving for their colonoscopy appointments.
- **100% complete bowel prep**! All patients had followed the instructions, and the doctors could complete a **very thorough procedure**.
- **50% had polyps removed**. On average, approximately **15%** will have polyps removed. ***We reached people in NEED for the service.***
- Two patients had **more than SIX polyps** removed.

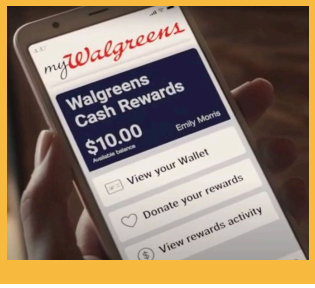
Patients were **extremely grateful** and stating, "**Thank you, bless you**" as they were wheeled to their cars...

"One of the **GI docs was amazed** with the '**interesting and complex**' cases..."

"Guarantee, at least two lives were saved!"

"Another place that supported and helped me was Access Now with kind people who helped me obtain some medical help I needed when I could not afford it. I still have trouble accepting that there is an organization like Access Now to help people like you all do." - Charlie K.

myWalgreens Donation Program Helps Access Now



Want a new way to support Access Now's critical mission? We're one of a select few area nonprofits selected for the **myWalgreens** donation program!

Members of the myWalgreens loyalty program will be able to earn and donate Walgreens Cash rewards to Access Now.

This program is available through the Walgreens mobile app and online at Walgreens.com.

For Our Partner Clinics: Need FHASES Training?

FHASES is the software system that we use to manage all aspects of the care we offer. Access Now's Karyna Marcelo is available to provide an introductory walkthrough to FHASES (for Access Now enrollments and referral processing) to new employees or as a refresher class, both in person and over Zoom. Contact us today if interested!

Access Now Holiday Closures

There's never a moment when Access Now's services are unneeded by the patients it serves. Between all the phone calls, scheduling, and follow-ups, our compassionate, devoted staff have more than earned some much-needed time with their families on the following days:

- **Thanksgiving**: Thurs. & Friday, November 27-28
- **Christmas**: Wed. & Thurs., December 24 & 25
- **New Year's Eve**: Wed., December 31
- **New Year's Day**: Thurs., January 1, 2026

We hope the inspirational news shared here has brought a smile to your face today.

We need you to be a partner in our success. Please click here.

Any amount will go a long way in helping Central Virginia's uninsured find the medical treatment they need. Thank you for your support!

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