



THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Dennis Eckersley and grateful patient, Joanne Guarino. See "Out of the Park" inside.

Our Mission:

The mission of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP) is to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women and children in the greater Boston area.

BHCHP Offers:

Primary Care
Behavioral Health
Oral Health
Family Services
Case Management
Medical Respite Care
Outreach

We are:

Physicians
Dentists
Registered Nurses
Social Workers
Building & Maintenance Staff
Physician Assistants
Nurse Practitioners
Administrative Staff
Psychiatrists
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counselors
Food Services Staff
Case Managers
Dental Assistants

The View From the Bridge is a publication of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, bridging the gap between homelessness and health 24/7/365.

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BURIED IN A PAUPERS' FIELD

Dennis Buff - Guiding Inspiration for the Dennis Buff Bequest Society



Dennis Buff

We had cared for **Dennis Buff** for years; in his cardboard box under a loading dock at the Wise Potato Chip factory in South Boston, in the hospital, in Barbara McInnis House and finally in housing. Dennis struggled with mental illness and alcoholism. He suffered the usual ravages of the street: frostbite, fractures and a very deep sense of worthlessness. His was a pain filled life.

He had, like many other homeless patients, called us his "family" and listed us as next-of-kin in all of his diverse medical records and housing applications. Like many families,

our relationship with Dennis was not always easy. But, with the constant support of his medical team and the staff at the Barbara McInnis House, Dennis moved into his own apartment in the summer of 2008.

On August 4, 2009 Dennis was found dead in his room at much too young an age. He was laid to rest in a paupers' field. We know he is now at peace and will always have a place in our family.

On November 21, 2009, the day after Thanksgiving, we received a poignant and unexpected bequest of several thousand dollars from Dennis. The startling and ironic news of his gift ran quickly and deeply through all in our organization who knew him. He is the first patient to ever leave a bequest to BHCHP and only the second donor (that we know of) who has left a bequest to our organization in our 25-year history.

On August 10, 2010, shortly after the first anniversary of his death, the Board of Directors of Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program created the **Dennis Buff Bequest Society*** to honor his memory and to acknowledge his generosity forever as a guiding inspiration for others.

Dennis's bequest reminds us that:

- **we are fortunate to serve men and women like him**
- **we can never give up on even our most troubled patients**
- **we are, in the fullest sense, family, for many of the men and women we serve**
- **one does not have to be wealthy to make a bequest of enduring importance**
- **without support, men and women like Dennis will live and die with neither care nor hope.**

BHCHP's Dennis Buff Bequest Society, named in honor of this grateful patient, exists to encourage gifts of this kind and to recognize donors who have made such a commitment to our organization.

*A charitable bequest is simply a distribution from a donor's estate to a charitable organization through his/her last will and testament.

A LEADER IN A LEADING STATE

Thoughts on how Health Care Reform intersects with BHCHP's present and future

Dear Friends,

Massachusetts is committed to the care of homeless people. Programs and policies developed here serve as models for the rest of the nation, and BHCHP, shaped in this environment, is one of those models.

As the nation prepares to implement sweeping health insurance reform, no program and no state has more experience or better infrastructure to enroll homeless adults in Medicaid and serve them as we do, incorporating their care within the mainstream of excellence in Boston's medical community.

It is costly to care for this vulnerable population. We believe that BHCHP, in close collaboration with its hospital and community partners, helps this state to manage that cost effectively. We will continue to identify and develop systems that deliver the highest quality health care and are, at the same time, structured to contain costs. It will continue to be our challenge to demonstrate these savings in the costs avoided because of the care provided.

As we adjust to changing and challenging times, our mission will continue to be our guide: to provide or assure access to the highest quality health care for all homeless men, women and children in the greater Boston area.

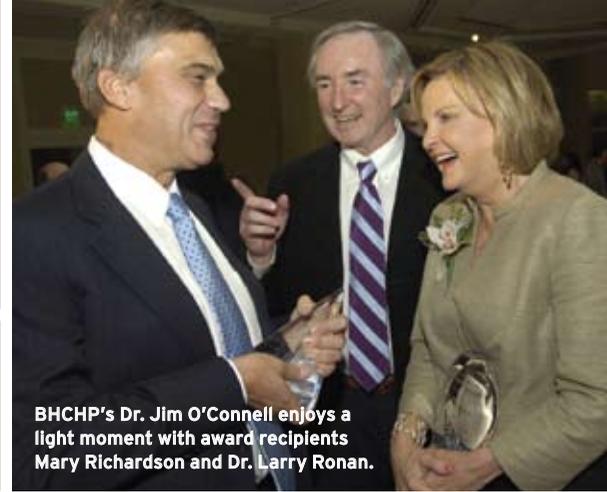
BHCHP could not exist without you. We are profoundly aware of your investment in this medicine that matters so much to Boston's most vulnerable men, women and children and will continue to take great care to carefully steward your generosity in the interest of all. Thank you.



Robert Taube, PhD, MPH
Executive Director



James O'Connell, MD
President



BHCHP's Dr. Jim O'Connell enjoys a light moment with award recipients Mary Richardson and Dr. Larry Ronan.

OUT OF THE PARK

BHCHP's 25th Anniversary Gala

When you're invited to address 300 of Boston's medical, industrial and sports elite, you're bound to feel a bit nervous. Grateful BHCHP patient Joanne Guarino is no exception. She had some pre-event jitters and was especially relieved to know that her primary care doctor, BHCHP's Brian Klausner, would be there to walk her to the podium and introduce her. They have been partners in Joanne's recovery and healing for a few years now and she trusts him...a lot.

He was great...The audience loved his warm and clear affection for Joanne and the honest way he helped them to understand the challenges she was facing. He loaded the bases.

And then it was Joanne's turn at bat. She's faced challenges before and this night would be no exception. She told her story of homelessness with a deft touch and surprising humor. Her audience of 300 savvy and experienced professionals not only listened, they silently rooted for her as she moved them repeatedly from laughter to tears and back again...and they came to their feet when she finished. It was the grandest of slams.

And then, to make a great night even better, BHCHP got to recognize the important generosity of two of its long time heroes, a woman of the media and a man of medicine, for the knowledge and healing they have brought to so many in our region.

- The First Annual *Tim Russert Award* was presented to **Mary Richardson**, Co-Anchor, WCVB-TV's *Chronicle*
- The First Annual *Dr. Jim O'Connell Award* was presented to **Dr. Laurence "Larry" Ronan**, Co-Founder of the MGH Center for Global Health; Director of the MGH Thomas S. Durant, MD, Fellowship in Refugee Medicine

None of this would have been possible without the guidance and generous support of the event co-chairs: Red Sox President and CEO, Larry Lucchino and his wife Stacey, EMC Chairman, President and CEO Joe Tucci, EMC Vice Chairman, Bill Teuber, event master of ceremonies, Jim Brett and the steadfast support of the Red Sox Foundation.

More facts and photos on line at www.bhchp.org

Donate Now

WWW.BHCHP.ORG

MAKING NEWS WHILE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

From *The Boston Business Journal*:

Sharon Morrison, RN, has been named a *BBJ Champions of Health*. The prestigious award honors the best and brightest health care professionals in Massachusetts.

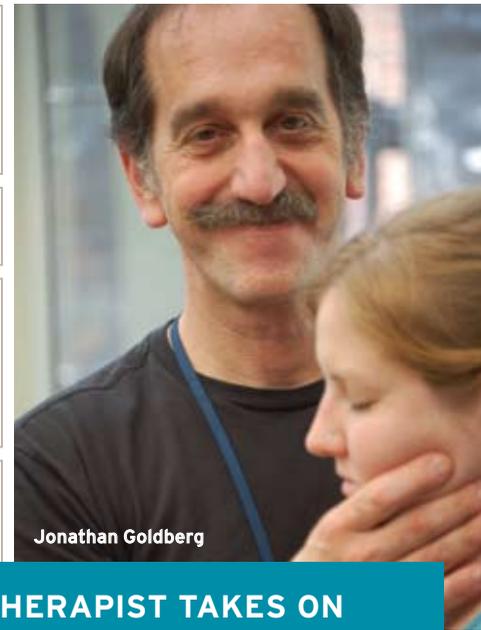
The Bostonian Group, long time BHCHP friend and supporter, was recently honored by the *BBJ* with its **Partner of the Year in Health Care** award. TBG provides financial support to BHCHP operations, volunteer support to BHCHP patients and leadership support through TBG partner and Senior VP, Peter C. Pedro, Jr., who sits on BHCHP's Board of Directors.

BHCHP was named one of **The Best Places to Work** by the *BBJ* in their annual review of workplaces across our area. As we enjoy this honor, we know that the single best thing about BHCHP is not the structure or the management or the employment policies, but rather the remarkable people who have dedicated their professional lives in pursuit of our mission.

The Red Sox Foundation and NESN teamed up for the sixth year in a row to collect new white athletic socks for BHCHP's patients. BHCHP, Executive director, Bob Taube, threw out the first pitch at the first of the two **Sox for Socks** games. Thousands of socks were collected from the fans of Red Sox nation.

Travis Baggett, MD, from the BHCHP clinic at Long Island, is the lead author of an analysis of homeless access to health care services that was recently published in the *American Journal of Public Health*. The article, **Gaps in the System: Substantial Unmet Health Care Needs of the Homeless Population** reinvestigates data from a 2003 BHCHP research survey.

Jim O'Connell, MD, BHCHP president, is the lead author of **The Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program: A Public Health Framework**, an article, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, detailing how BHCHP has evolved over the past 25 years into a service model embodying the core functions and essential services of public health.



Jonathan Goldberg

VOLUNTEER MASSAGE THERAPIST TAKES ON MANY ROLLS IN THE CARE OF BHCHP PATIENTS

A professional massage therapist with his own practice, **Jonathan Goldberg** has been reaching out with his gentle and skilled hands to touch the needs of the patients and staff of BHCHP for 8 years. He's done everything from serving Thanksgiving dinner to filling in at our foot clinic to massaging backs and necks on Nurses Appreciation Day.

His legacy contribution began in 2005 when Jonathan teamed up with BHCHP to launch **Hand to Hand**, a hand massage program providing relaxation and stress relief to our respite patients who are recuperating from cancer, depression and other similar illnesses. Partnering with Simmons College, BHCHP utilizes student volunteers from their doctoral program in physical therapy to deliver weekly massage sessions. Jonathan provides massage training and support to the students each year.

Originally started with just 2 Simmons' students, today there are more than 10 volunteers interacting with our patients in a deep and meaningful way, eliciting responses of genuine gratefulness and enjoyment. The program is now also offered in one of our shelter-based clinics and has flourished under Jonathan's watchful eye.

"Jonathan is amazingly available...and completely accommodating. It's never about him...only about what he can do to help" comments BHCHP's Manager of Volunteer Services and Community Partnerships, Carrie Eldridge-Dickson.

"I keep coming back to BHCHP because I feel so well cared for when I'm there...by everyone from the executive director to the kitchen staff. No one is too important or too busy. It makes me happy and proud to be able to share in the work of this organization and help the patients to have the same experience that I do. The generous spirit of BHCHP moves me. I'm sure it moves the patients too."

Thank you, Jonathan...for sharing the mission and extending your reach into the lives of our patients. This, once again, is **medicine that matters**.

BHCHP - A "NURSE BASED" MIRACLE

Every corner of BHCHP relies on nurses to assist in the assessment and treatment of patients and to organize the work of our clinics and respite program. Our nurses remind us that we are here to relieve suffering and bring assurance and comfort to vulnerable and sometimes challenging patients.

BHCHP is extremely fortunate to have **127 RNs** and **38 Nurse Practitioners** who lend their hands, heads and hearts to care for the 12,000 different patients who need their care each year...7/24/365.

BHCHP's Nurses Week celebration, held in the Atrium at Jean Yawkey Place, allowed nurses to slip away for a few minutes (or an hour) of food, conversation, acknowledgement and relaxation. Over 60 nurses joined in the afternoon of learning and relaxation.

BHCHP could not exist for long without its donors. It could not exist for even a day without its nurses. We can never say "thank you" enough...to each one of you.

THICKER THAN WATER...

By Sharon Morrison, RN

Saio Kumalah-bah is the Sierra Leone born nurse/manager of BHCHP's clinic at **Transitions** in Mattapan. *Transitions* is a residential alcohol and narcotic addiction program administered by the Boston Public Health Commission.

Everyone who meets Saio meets a kind, firm, strong and caring woman...a nurturer who welcomes, shows, guides and leads the way. Saio carries deeply within her the essence of a caregiver...it seems to be rooted in the soil, the family and the friends who nurtured her as a child in Africa. In a very clear and relaxed way everyone who passes into her life is welcome simply because they are part of the human family.

This sense of family serves this wise nurse well as she cares for homeless men and women...people broken by poverty, mental illness and substance abuse. No pushover, she is clear and firm and kind and direct and undaunted by even the most troubling of personal stories. She can take it all in and let each patient know that she understands and has hope for them. It can be very empowering when someone else has hope for you.

Saio is such a good manager because she is very smart about the disease and the medicine and she understands the efficiencies and processes that are needed to make a clinic an effective place. But most of all she is a good manager because she never forgets that the clinic is there to respond to suffering...to recognize suffering and to offer relief and healing.

Sharon Morrison is a nurse at BHCHP's clinic in The New England Center for Homeless Veterans.

BHCHP is fortunate to have so many dedicated nurses who bring their unique healing to the needs of our patients. We are fortunate to have your support in making their work possible.



Neck massage brings a moment of relaxation during "Nurses' Appreciation Day"



Debbie Thornton and Sinead Cooney, BHCHP RNs



Saio Kumalah-bah, RN

YOU CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE WITH A SMALL GIFT

A Holiday Season Drive

It's never easy to be homeless. For parents, the holiday season can be particularly difficult. Gift-giving can help a family to stick together when they are living in a shelter or motel.

By purchasing a **gift card** to a store like **Target** or **Old Navy** you will help the families we serve to buy more than toys or clothes. You will be giving parents the ability to select a gift tailored specifically for their children. Your generosity will foster the dignity and self-esteem that can be so difficult for homeless parents to hold on to.

The holiday season presents special opportunities to make this kind of gift that can matter so much. For more information please contact: **Volunteer@bhchp.org** or call **857.654.1048**



Dr. Jim Bonnar



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ON FINDING WELLBEING IN A CRAZY WORLD

(continued from back page)

Dr. Bonnar works gently, patiently and clearly to help each person have a chance to discover a path to wellbeing in a crazy world...For some it means lingering with the facts of their lives just long enough to know that they really and truly have a problem, for others it means they have support and help coping with the challenges of having their own door key for the first time in many years.

The work of this group is not glamorous. There are no guarantees of success. Rather, it is a calm and determined pledge of hope to a very troubled group of people...a pledge that, with work, these things are possible:

- people can grow in their freedom to negotiate the ups and downs of a crazy world,
- people can move beyond shame and guilt to acknowledge where they are in their own recovery,
- people can come to understand their crazy ideas in a way that will help them to see the work that is ahead and help them to stop excusing the behavior that fractures their lives.

Mike has been coming for 2 years, since the beginning of the group. He's a direct man who looks right at you when he talks. "I hate coming. I hate groups. It's raining out and I don't have to look far for a crazy idea tonight. What am I doing out? I hate it but it's what I do almost every week to keep a commitment to myself. I'm looking for a way to live and as much as I hate groups and coming out on rainy night...this is my night to try to learn to take care of myself."

Mike, in his "own place" for 2 years now, knows that these 90 minutes each week help him anchor the rest of his days and make it possible for him to realize that he is doing OK at the end of a day.

It's a simple goal...to help someone to know that they are doing OK and that there is a chance they will continue to do OK. This is certainly **medicine that matters** delivered with the persevering patience of Dr. Jim Bonnar.

YOUR SUPPORT WILL BRING...

the **Dignity** of reconstructive dentistry to a 31-year-old mother living in a domestic violence shelter with her 3 children.

the **Trust** of a therapist to a deeply depressed 46-year-old man living in a doorway.

the **Hope** of a respite bed and medical care to a 51-year-old women recuperating from breast cancer at Barbara McInnis House.

the **Healing** comfort of a nurse's visit to a mother and her 8-year-old girl spending their fourth month in a motel room.

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25 YEARS OF MEDICINE THAT MATTERS



ON FINDING WELLBEING IN A CRAZY WORLD



Dr. Bonnar (right) helps chronically homeless men and women overcome the odds.

It's 6:30 on a Tuesday night in late summer and **Dr. Jim Bonnar**, a BHCHP psychiatrist who works on the Street Team* and a gentle, clear man with a gaze as easy as his smile, is settling into one of the comfortable chairs in a conference room at Jean Yawkey Place. It's time to start ***Finding Wellbeing in a Crazy World***, the "group" he leads in this space each week.

There is no need for him to suggest topics tonight...the group members present the crazy ideas that they have encountered either in themselves or in the world we all live in.

The men and women gathered on this night are here because the doctors and nurses of BHCHP's Street Team want them to have this opportunity—to find a path to a less painful life. Some now live in their own apartments in Boston's urban neighborhoods, others are in BHCHP's respite care facility two floors above and a few still make the city's parks and alleys their place of rest. These very different people have at least two things in common:

- each has been profoundly impacted by complex trauma that has resulted in mental illness or substance abuse or both; and
- each knows what it means to be a "rough sleeper"...living homeless and on the street.

"Like all of us, these men and women are trying to discover a sense of wellbeing in the crazy world that surrounds us all," comments Dr. Bonnar. "Very few have an easy time. Most struggle mightily with the consuming circumstances that pulled them into homelessness years ago. We are trying to help them find and stay on a new pathway to recovery. It's a simple but challenging goal. The odds are not always in their favor so we work with them and try to help them recognize and overcome the odds."

continued inside

* BHCHP's Street Team serves long term homeless men and women, "rough sleepers" who shun shelters. They are the chronically homeless men and women of our city.