

The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland: A Response to a Community Need

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The seed that was to grow to become The Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland was planted during a dreary Cleveland winter in 1969. As a result of what appeared to be a growing national trend of drug abuse amongst young people, several members of the community met at a home in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. The meeting was called by Bruce Newman of the Cleveland Foundation. He articulated what was perceived to be a growing need in our community for a medical facility where young people who had health problems relating to drug abuse could go for medical treatment without fear of being turned over to the police, or for that matter, over to their parents. The Haight-Ashberry Free Clinic, already in existence, was the model of what Bruce Newman considered to be a perceived need. As a result of the initial meeting, we created what was known as "Together Hotline" housed in University Circle. We advertised on rock and roll stations in January of 1970. As a result of the Together Hotline, we received a multitude of calls growing greatly on each evening with young people calling with problems relating to the use and abuse of drugs. It became very apparent that there was in fact a need for a free clinic in Cleveland.

Essential and critical to the creation of The Free Clinic was the role of the Cleveland Foundation and George Gund Foundation, particularly Bruce Newman, Barbara Ross and Jim Lipscomb of the Gund Foundation. With their support, we also were able to garner the support of the Cleveland Academy of Medicine which surprisingly supported us and assisted us in recruiting volunteer doctors. I might add that a handful of those very same doctors who volunteered in June of 1970 to work at The Free Clinic are still volunteers today. One in particular, Dr. Peter Cubberly, who recently retired from Kaiser Permanente, has become The Free Clinic's Medical Director.

The Free Clinic today remains supported strongly by the Cleveland Foundation, by the Gund Foundation and many other local and national foundations. Without the help of these foundations, The Free Clinic would never have been created, nor would it have existed for 25 years. Also, there is an enormous wealth of support from volunteers, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, and dentists, all of whom who have contributed greatly to The Free Clinic's existence.

On June 1, 1995, The Free Clinic celebrated its 25th anniversary and it is anticipated that we will, throughout the year through June of 1996, celebrate 25 years of service to the Cleveland community and we remain free.