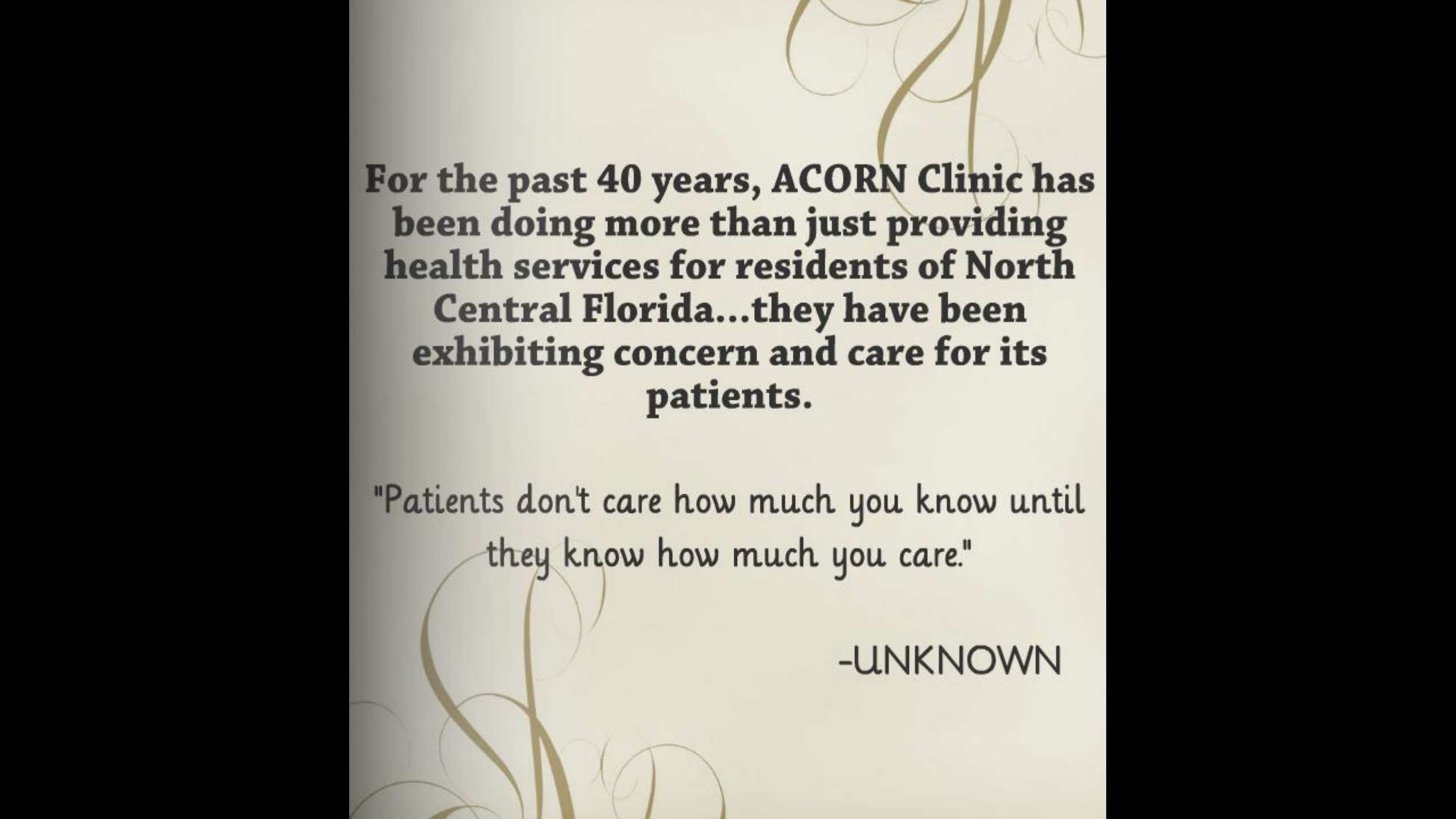


ACORN... "Grow With Us"
40th Anniversary



ACORN Dental and Medical Clinic



For the past 40 years, ACORN Clinic has been doing more than just providing health services for residents of North Central Florida...they have been exhibiting concern and care for its patients.

"Patients don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

-UNKNOWN



ACORN Medical and Dental trailers side-by-side.

"From little acorns, mighty oaks do grow."

-American Proverb

...Which goes to show that the ACORN Clinic is a great representation of this quote. While ACORN Clinic was once only a thought, with the help of many supporters this thought gained the proper nourishment to blossom into what it is today...

ACORN Medical Clinic



Then



Now



ACORN Dental Clinic



Then



Now



How it all got started...

Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs, Inc., ACORN, was started in 1974 by two Gainesville churches – Westminster Presbyterian and The United Church of Gainesville. It was the vision of a few people: Dr. Glenn Dickson, Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church; Pastor Larry Reimer of United Church of Gainesville; Harriet (Happy) Taylor, former Vista worker; Joanne Weinman, former Vista worker; and Barbara Scott, R.N., to establish a health clinic in an area where there was a great need for health services.

Although the clinic was a vision of a few people, it took many dedicated people to bring it into fruition. Initially the clinic was started in an attempt to bring medical services to migrant workers and residents of the northwestern section of Alachua County where the median income per family was \$3500 in the early 1970s. So with that in mind, health professionals willing to volunteer their time allowed the clinic to open.



About us (Medical Clinic)

The Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs, Inc. (ACORN) Clinic is a 501 (c)(3) organization located in Brooker, FL providing affordable medical care, dental care, and social services primarily for low-income residents in North Central Florida.

With the help of health professionals volunteering, the ACORN medical clinic is able to provide services such as:

General care

- Annual physicals and lab tests
- Proper care for patients with diabetes, cardiovascular disease,, hypertension, etc
- Mental health counseling
- Counseling on nutrition and weight management

Women's health care

- Routine gynecological exams
- Regular breast exams and self-breast examination education and mammogram referral
- Referral for pre-natal care
- Treatment for urinary tract infections

Children's health care

- Child health maintenance
- Care and follow-up for acute and chronic illnesses
- School and camp physicals
- Treatment of minor illnesses or injuries including colds, aches and pains

About us (Dental Clinic)

ACORN dental clinic first started out operating in a donated trailer and now today is a modern full service facility. It features 6 dental chairs and a 2 chair oral surgery suite.

Service include:

- Full restorative care such as: cleanings and exams for adults and children,extractions, fillings, crowns,etc.
- Pediatric dentistry
- Outreach education on oral hygiene at local schools



The

1970's

What was happening during this decade:

- Start of the digital revolution
- Richard Nixon resigns from office on August 9th, 1974
- End of the Vietnam war on April 8th,1975



1974



Ms. Taylor collected blankets and warm clothing from the First Presbyterian Church in order to take to workers after the Santa Fe labor camp was burned out.



1975



- The town of LaCrosse in Alachua County donated the use of the LaCrosse Women's club building and provided utilities in order to allow the clinic to open once a week on Thursdays from 7:30pm-10:00pm.
- A needs assessment that was conducted determined the need for health and dental care. At this time there was only 1 part time doctor. With this in mind, the opening of a medical clinic took place soon after.



1976



- The medical clinic was opened in 1976 in a small, rural community outside of Brooker.

1978-1979

- Spring 1978: start selling frozen yogurt at the festival in order to raise funds for the clinic
- April 1978: ACORN hires 4 full-time employees and 1 part-time worker, with the help of grant funding
- May 1978: ACORN publishes its first newsletter called *Nutcracker*
- October 1978: (setback) CETA Grant is not extended for clinic funding
- January 1979: the clinic begins treating general medical problems
- May 1979: (setback) had to vacate the LaCrosse women's building
- October 23, 1979: the clinic opens its doors again, this time in a trailer

The 1980's

What was happening during this decade:

- John Lennon was assassinated December 8th, 1980
- Michael Jackson releases Thriller album on November 30th, 1982
- Space shuttle "Challenger" exploded on January 28th, 1986

1982



- The dental clinic was opened next to the medical clinic in 1982 in a small, rural community called Brooker.

1988



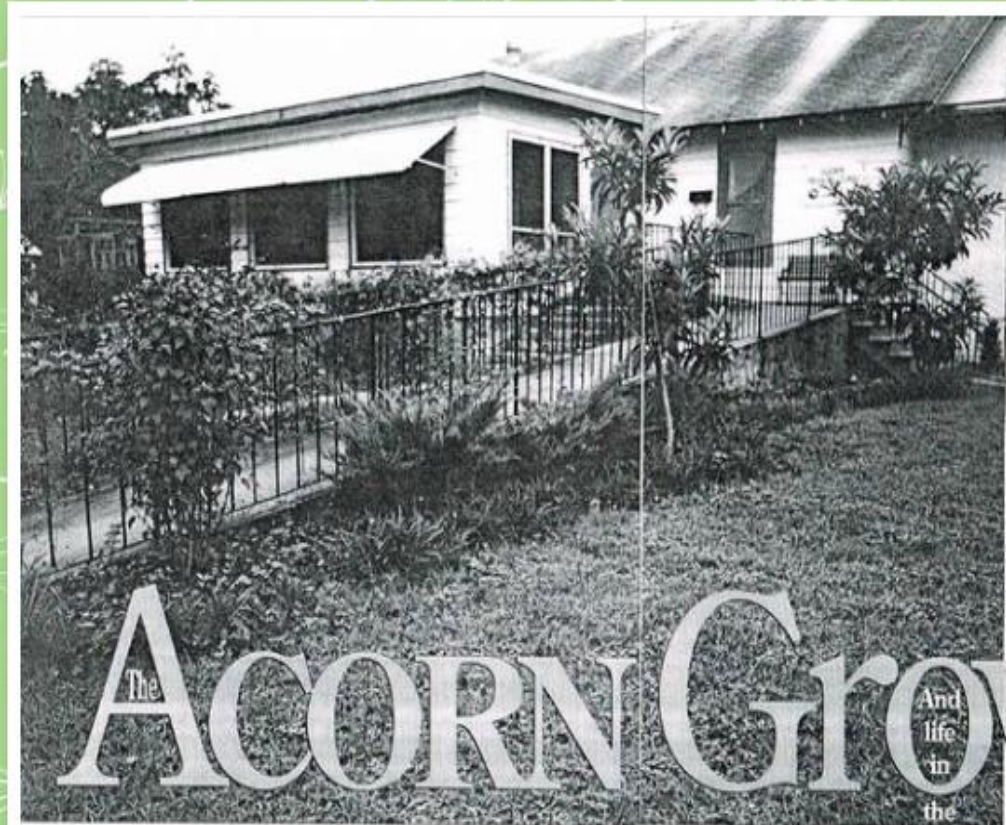
The Gainesville Sun newspaper published an article and picture depicting ACORN infrastructure being moved. The photo caption reads "The new home for ACORN was on the road Thursday, moving down 53rd Avenue. By early afternoon the house was parked on St. Rd. 121, north of U.S. 441. The journey to the clinic site near Brooker will begin again Monday morning".

The 1990's

What was happening during this decade:

- Hubble Space Telescope is launched on April 24th, 1990
- Bill Clinton is elected president on November 3rd, 1992
- Princess Diana dies in a car crash on August 31st, 1997

1991



The ACORN Grows

And life in the country will never be the same.

This was country, real country, not the Grand Ole Opry. Here the cycle of birth, struggle and death was the natural order of things. Generally, you didn't know you were sick unless something hurt so bad it couldn't be ignored. Sometimes your family didn't know you were sick, until you died.

Rural Alachua County was an unforgiving place in 1973, a place where if you were poor you neither looked for nor received medical care. Sometimes there wasn't enough money for food, or decent clothing, or a bed to sleep in. Or a roof to sleep under.

But it isn't 1973 anymore, and the

rural needs of Alachua County are no longer unmet.

Today, outside of Brooker on SR 235, there's something some folks are calling a miracle. It's the ACORN Clinic, and it sprang from nothing at all to quite a lot.

country will never be the same.

by Lillian Kaye

The ACORN clinic (left) may not be fancy, but it strives to serve the medical needs of rural Alachua County.

ACORN stands for Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs, but what it actually translates into is a modern, fully equipped medical clinic with the capability of meeting basic medical needs for both adults and children.

And next door, connected to it, is a dental clinic with five fully equipped stations, an X-ray room and a laboratory where dental appliances are constructed. Both are something that some rural families had never seen before they saw them at ACORN.

It all started from a weekly clinic in a borrowed room at The Women's Building in LaCrosse. There were three physicians from Gainesville then, all of whom had volun-

teered to come out one evening a week on a rotating basis.

But although treatment was free, business at the clinic was not brisk. On a good night, maybe eight or ten patients would show up. Trust comes slowly in the country. It had to be earned.

Dr. Ward Noyes was one of those

An article is written about ACORN stating how far it has come from first opening in the 1970s. The article states that "it all started from a weekly clinic in a borrowed room in the Women's building in LaCrosse". Even though treatment was free at that time, the ACORN clinic would serve about 8 to 10 patients on a busy night. With that being said, ACORN had its work cut out in regards to earning the residents trust and creating a positive reputation, but nowadays the clinic is considered to be a great thing for Brooker and nearby communities.

1994: 20th Anniversary

(A day of fun: food, friends, and music)



1994: 20th Anniversary

(Formal event)



1994: 20th Anniversary



1995

ACORN striving to help low-income patients

June 15, 1995

By CLIFF SMELLEY
Telegraph Staff Writer
They have a saying, "from a small acorn grows a mighty oak tree."

That seems to describe the ACORN (Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs) clinic.

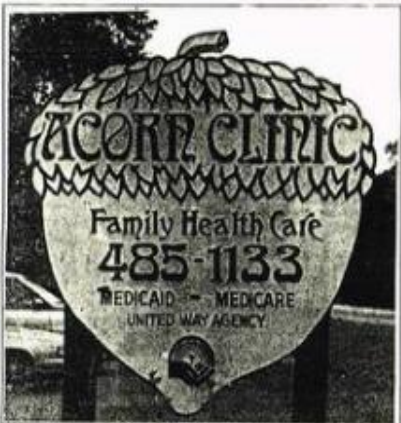
When it first opened in 1979, there weren't much to it. It was open only one night a week and operated out of a room at the Women's Building in LaCrosse.

Now, ACORN resides in two renovated houses on SR-235, approximately two miles south of Brookier, offering four clinics to low-income people of Alachua, Bradford and Union counties.

ACORN is a non-profit clinic that offers a general medical clinic, a children's clinic, a women's clinic and a dental clinic. It is supported by the United Way of Alachua County, civic groups, community churches, Alachua County, patient fees, Medicaid, Medicare, fundraising events, foundations and donations.

Executive director Marilyn Mesh said ACORN still needs additional support and she is trying to persuade the Bradford and Union

The ACORN clinic (below), located on SR-235, approximately two miles south of Brookier, may be a little hard to see from the road, but its sign (left) is certainly an eye-catcher.



County commissioners to help out. Though the majority of patients are from Alachua County, the ACORN services those from Bradford and Union counties, also. Of the 5,013 patients the clinic served last year, 35 percent were from Bradford County and 40 percent were from Union County, Mesh said.

"All of our funding is local," Mesh said. "We don't receive any federal funds and that's why we rely on the resources of the patients we serve to help us out, (and) United Way and patient fees."

First visits to the medical clinic are \$40. Each visit after that ranges from \$15 to \$20, depending on the patient's income, plus lab and medication costs.

An adult visitant at the dental clinic costs \$15. Other dental costs vary, depending on factors such as the number of X-rays taken or the number of cavities a person may have, Mesh said.

ACORN is staffed by three full-time and four part-time employees, but it's volunteers that enable the clinic to provide its services. Last year, ACORN had 57,000 of donated labor by professionals, Mesh said.

Presently, there are 52 volunteers at ACORN, Mesh said. There are 15 physicians, 10-15 dentists and the rest of the volunteers are advanced registered nurse practitioners, Mesh said. One of those volunteers is Matthew Holbeke.

Holbeke, a nurse practitioner student, said ACORN may not have all the equipment that other facilities do, but that doesn't take away from the experience of helping others.

"My personal experience has been absolutely wonderful," Holbeke said.

It's a great sense of satisfaction to be able to help those who have no other place to go for help, Holbeke said. Helping those people gives something back to the surrounding community and that's the greatest satisfaction, and one he shouldn't experience alone, Holbeke said.

"I honestly believe that people in my field should give back to the community in services like this," Holbeke said.

The clinic also provides a good

training ground for dental students of the University of Florida and Santa Fe Community College.

Dental students work to provide care to patients under faculty supervision "and you get one of the best cleanings you've ever had in

your life," Mesh said. This allows the clinic to offer more services and keep the costs down, Mesh said.

Though the clinic requires payment at the time of visit, they

See ACORN, page 5B

ACORN

Continued from page 2B

will work with people who can't afford to pay, Mesh said.

"Even if we can't help the person, we never just say, 'Sorry, we can't help you,' and hang up," Mesh said. "We help them try and figure out places to go."

Good news in the future of ACORN is a new building, which will include a new dental wing and an expanded medical clinic, Mesh said.

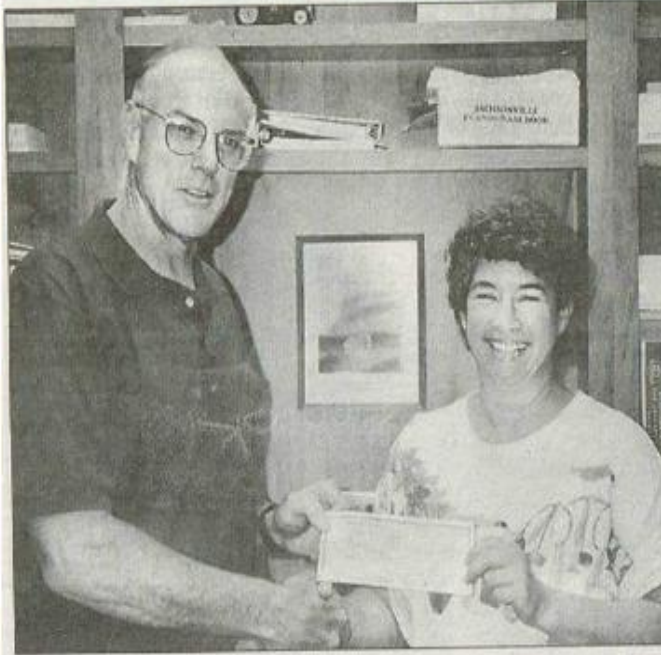
Though they always need help and financial support, the clinic has managed to survive since that one-room clinic in LaCrosse and that's what they hope to continue doing, Mesh said.

"We're here to stay and provide services in this rural area," Mesh said.

Those wanting to set up appointments or find out more about ACORN can call 485-1133 (medical clinic) or 485-2772 (dental clinic).

Bradford County Telegraph writer, Cliff Smelley, publishes an article making note of the services ACORN has to offer surrounding and nearby residents. It also makes mention of ACORN's hopes to expand the medical clinic and add a build a dental clinic structure.

1997



Special to The S

Helping ACORN grow

Dave Berkes, district manager of Publix Super Markets, presents Marilyn Mesh, executive director of ACORN Clinic, with a check for \$10,000 for ACORN's capital campaign. The donation will assist ACORN in the construction of its new dental clinic and community center near Brooker.

10 NEIGHBORS/Thursday, December 11, 1997

Dave Berkes presents a check to Marilyn Mesh in December for \$10,000 to help ACORN with the construction of the dental clinic.

1999

Don't Miss the 1999 Rural Health Awards

It has been a tradition of the NRHA's Annual Conference for more than 20 years to recognize the work and contributions of those in the rural health field. In 1999, the association will again present awards to those individuals and organizations that have made an outstanding difference in rural health.

The six categories are:

- Rural Health Practitioner of the Year;
- Louis Gorm Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care;
- Outstanding Rural Health Practice;
- Outstanding Rural Health Program;
- Distinguished Researcher; and
- Distinguished Educator.

The 1999 Rural Health Awards will be presented during a dinner to be held Saturday evening, May 29, 1999, marking the conclusion of the NRHA's 23rd Annual Conference in San Diego, Calif. A performance by the musical group The Orthers and dancing will follow the awards presentation.



Marilyn Mesh, executive director of the ACORN Clinic, accepts the Outstanding Rural Health Program Award from the NRHA.

Medicare, Medicaid, patient fees, civic groups, community churches, fund-raising events, foundation grants, and private donations.

Volunteers provided 9,534 hours in 1997, primarily in the areas of dental and nursing care. Through linkages with the University of Florida's College of Nursing and Dentistry, the Santa Fe Community College Program for Dental Assistants and Hygienists, and the Suwannee River Area Health Education Center, advanced practitioner master's students in nursing and senior students in dentistry and dental hygiene deliver a wide range of crucial services as part of their clinical practicum under the close supervision of licensed professionals and instructors.

The ACORN Clinic provides services that include pediatric care, women's care, counseling, social services, assistance to the elderly, physical therapy, teen pregnancy prevention programs, dental hygiene and oral surgery. ■



For 23 years now, the ACORN Clinic has been serving a growing rural population in north central Florida with the help of dentists and volunteers.


ACORN was nominated to win a Rural Health Award. The award ceremony was held on May 29, 1999.



The

2000's

What was happening during this decade:

- Terrorism attacks that forever changed the U.S. on September 11th, 2001
 - Mars exploration rovers were launched on June 1st, 2003
 - September 8th, 2001- September 1st, 2011: The Great Recession
- 

2000

Bradford Telegraph

March 16, 2000

Page 2B TELEGRAPH, TIMES & MONITOR



(l-r) Acorn Dental Coordinator Laurie Jennings, Florida Representative Cynthia Chestnut, immediate past president of the Acorn board Terri Dolan, president of the board Cindy Toth, Alachua County Commission Chairman Penny Wheat and Acorn Director Marilyn Mesh.

Acorn Clinic to double in size

By MARCIA MILLER
Telegraph Staff Writer

March 2 marked a historic occasion for the Acorn Clinic near Brookier as ground was broken on the \$350,000 building project which will double the clinic's current size.

The clinic serves low- to medium-income level people who live in the rural areas of Alachua, Bradford and Union counties. It provides medical care, dental care, counseling and other services.

In 1998, a total of about 8,000 people visited the clinic and the majority of them, about 41 percent, went to the clinic for medical care. About 33 percent went for dental care. The rest visited the pharmacy and/or took part in counseling or special services provided.

Fifty-two percent of the patients were from Alachua County, 31 percent were from Bradford and 11 percent were from Union. The remainder came from other areas.

According to Acorn Clinic Director Marilyn Mesh, the expansion project, which will provide an additional 1,700 square feet of space, will involve building a dental clinic adjacent to the existing facility. The current facility will be used for a medical clinic. Both dental and medical clinics currently share the existing space. The addition will

be named for Rob Fox, a volunteer dentist and loyal supporter of the clinic who died two years ago.

"It's a thrill to be actually doing this (breaking ground)," said Mesh. "So many years have been spent in planning and dreaming."

The clinic was opened 25 years ago by two Gainesville chazhaz who were concerned about the availability of health care to low-income people living in rural areas. It was first established in the

Women's Club building in LaCrosse and three doctors rotated to provide services. The services provided began to grow and the idea to establish a medical and dental clinic in the rural area took root.

Fifteen years ago, the clinic was opened on its present site in two trailers. Two other trailers were later moved to the site and renovated to provide the needed space.

See ACORN, page 8B

ACORN

Continued from page 1B

Cynthia Toth, president of the Acorn board of directors, said the groundbreaking was one of the brightest days in clinic history.

No one could imagine the growth we have had here. This clinic is vital to low-income families."

Toth said predictions show the clinic's client base will grow by 25 percent this year and with the expansion, there will be six rooms available for the medical clinic where now there are only three. The dental clinic will also be able to expand from five dental chairs to eight.

Toth said a big part of what makes the clinic able to operate is the number of volunteers who either give time or money to the project. She said a total of 9,500 volunteer hours were given to the clinic by medical professionals in 1999.

Terry Dolan, a past president of the Acorn board, said the name Acorn was appropriate for the clinic.

Because an acorn starts small and grows into a large oak tree. The clinic started out small and now provides a number of necessary services to a lot of people, he said.

Also speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony were Representative Cynthia Chestnut and Alachua County Commission Chairman Penny Wheat, Bradford County Commission Chairman Herman Johnson and Union County Commissioner Ricky Jenkins, who also present at the groundbreaking.

While the funds for the construction of the addition have been raised, more funding will be needed for equipment and supplies. An endowment fund has been set up for the clinic to provide these funds. Anyone wishing to contribute to the endowment fund should send a check to the clinic at 23320 North SR-23, Brookier, FL 32622, or call (352) 485-1133 for more information.

Mesh said that while the clinic is not designed to make a profit, the low rates or free service provided to qualifying people — along with the high cost of medications and other supplies necessary — mean that the clinic loses money on every patient it treats. It depends heavily on fund raising from church and other groups. The endowment fund will help make that situation more stable by providing a regular income from money invested on the fund's behalf. Donations will likely always be needed, however.

- The medical clinic expands from being 3 exam rooms to 6 exam rooms, two counseling offices, a separate medication area, and laboratory space. During this time, construction for the dental clinic began underway.

2000: Dental clinic construction



2000: Dental clinic construction



2003



- For a short period of time in the 2000s, ACORN's Medical clinic had an OB-Gyn named Dr. Torres who delivered patients babies, a.k.a ACORN babies.

2004: Sole Sisters



- The "Sole Sisters" event is held to spread breast cancer awareness.

Love you like a sister



In April of 2004, the "Sole Sisters" initiative was sponsored by well-known local photographer, Randy Batista. The "Sole Sisters" fundraising project raised \$55,000 to aid in ACORN's efforts to stomp out breast cancer. With the funds raised, the clinic is able to offer free mammograms for uninsured women ages 30-50.



LOVE



Enjoy
THE LITTLE
THINGS

2004: 30th Anniversary



ACORN Clinic's 30th Anniversary Volunteer & Partner Recognition Reception

Wednesday, October 20, 2004
5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

HPNP Reception Hall
Health Professions, Nursing & Pharmacy Building
(behind Shands)

Parking: In the visitor parking garage
on the west side of Shands

You will meet our Tooth Fairies!
(352) 485-1133 ext. 18

This event is sponsored by **SHANDS HealthCare**



2004: 30th Anniversary



Breast Health Outreach Program (BHOP)



Since the early 2000's ACORN Clinic has included a Breast Health Outreach Program as part of its Women's Health Partnership.

2014: 40th Anniversary



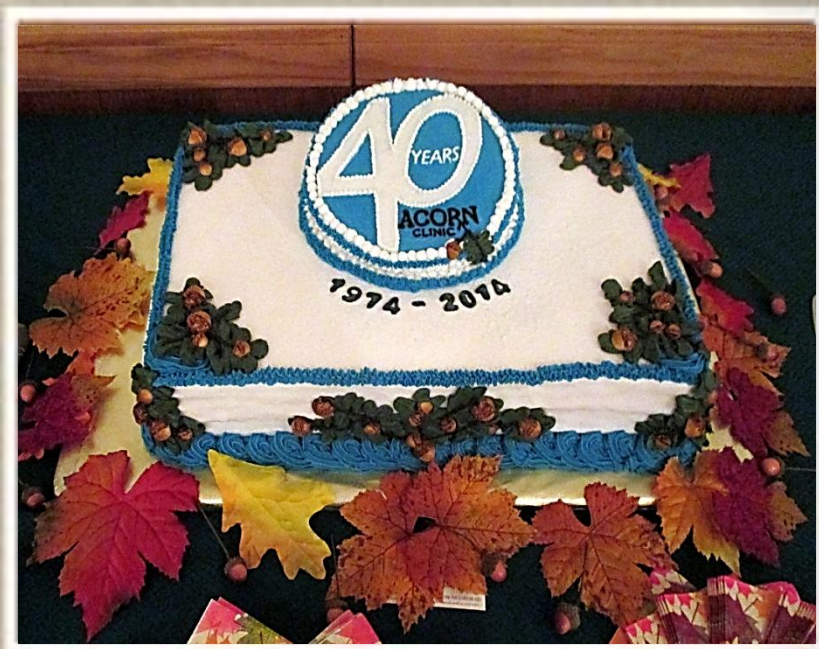
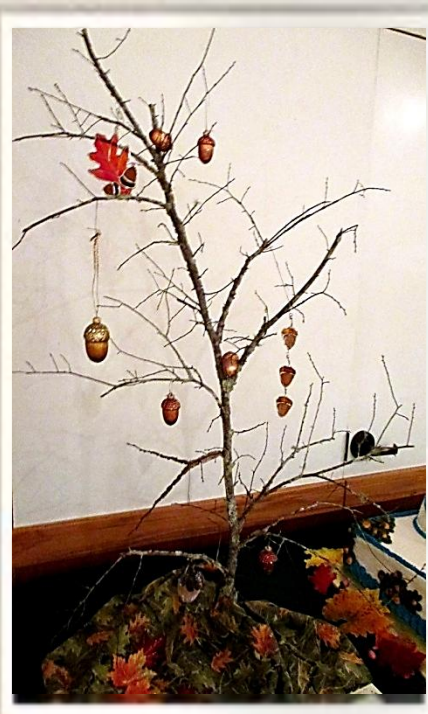
**ACORN CLINIC'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY
CELEBRATION
1974-2014**

Friday, November 21, 2014 from 5-7:30pm
United Church of Gainesville Reimer Fellowship Hall
1624 NW 5th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32603

**HONORING OUR VOLUNTEERS AND
SUPPORTERS**

JOIN US for:
Bella Luna Band, Memorabilia,
Refreshments/Libations, Art Silent Auction,
and Great People!








Tooth Fairy

For over 10 years, ACORN Clinic has had the well-known "Tooth Fairy Dental Outreach Program" targeting children ages three through six years who attend our rural area Head Start, preschool, and elementary schools. Children who attended the program are better prepared to achieve good oral health through the education provided and the take-home packets that include an age-appropriate tooth brush, tooth paste, and educational fliers for parents on children's oral hygiene and the dangers of second hand smoke. This includes a flyer on ACORN Clinic and its comprehensive services including pediatric dental care. Several programs invite parents to attend the sessions as well, and the Tooth Fairy is able to engage those parents in improving their children's oral hygiene.

"In this pocket you will find
A teensy, tiny tooth of mine.
So while I sleep where dreams are made,
Let's see if you can make a trade."
-Author Unknown



Vigant
Dear Tooth Fairy,
Thank you for helping
me brush my teeth
FROM
Nyan



2005



-ACORN gets a new logo.

2006



- ACORN received the Blue Foundation of Florida's Sapphire Award.

2008



-Alachua County Work of Heart Award for ACORN volunteers.

2009

-ACORN receives the Florida's surgeon general award for health innovation, prevention, and management.

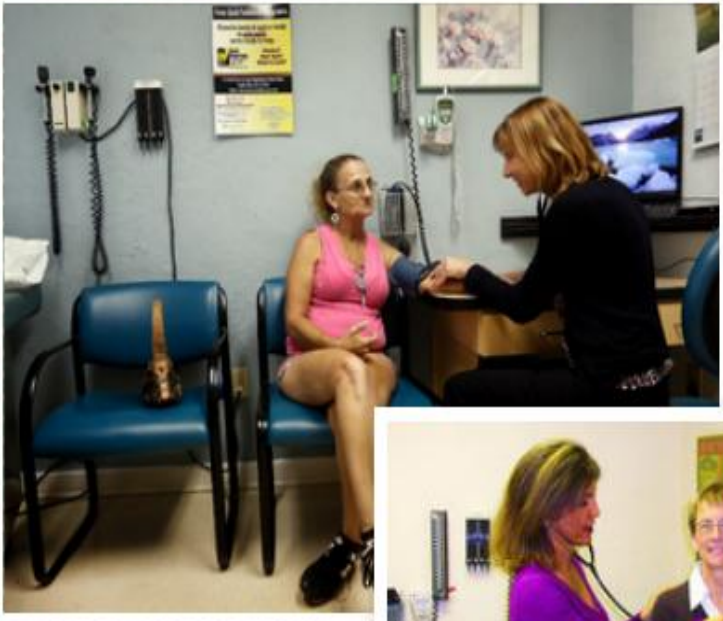
Marcia Millet: 2014 Work of Heart Awardee



In April 2014, Marcia Millett received the E.T. York Work of Heart Award for her service in the community including over 10 years volunteering at ACORN Clinic.

Medical Clinic
doctors and staff
(past and present)







ACORN Medical Clinic Spanish clinic

HOLA!



Since 2008, ACORN Clinic has collaborated with Dr. John Shahan and Pastor Jonathan Colon to serve Spanish migrant workers in a monthly free clinic. Patients from a local Spanish church are transported by their pastor for primary health care.



Dental Clinic
doctors and staff
(past and present)







Beautification Day

10-19-13

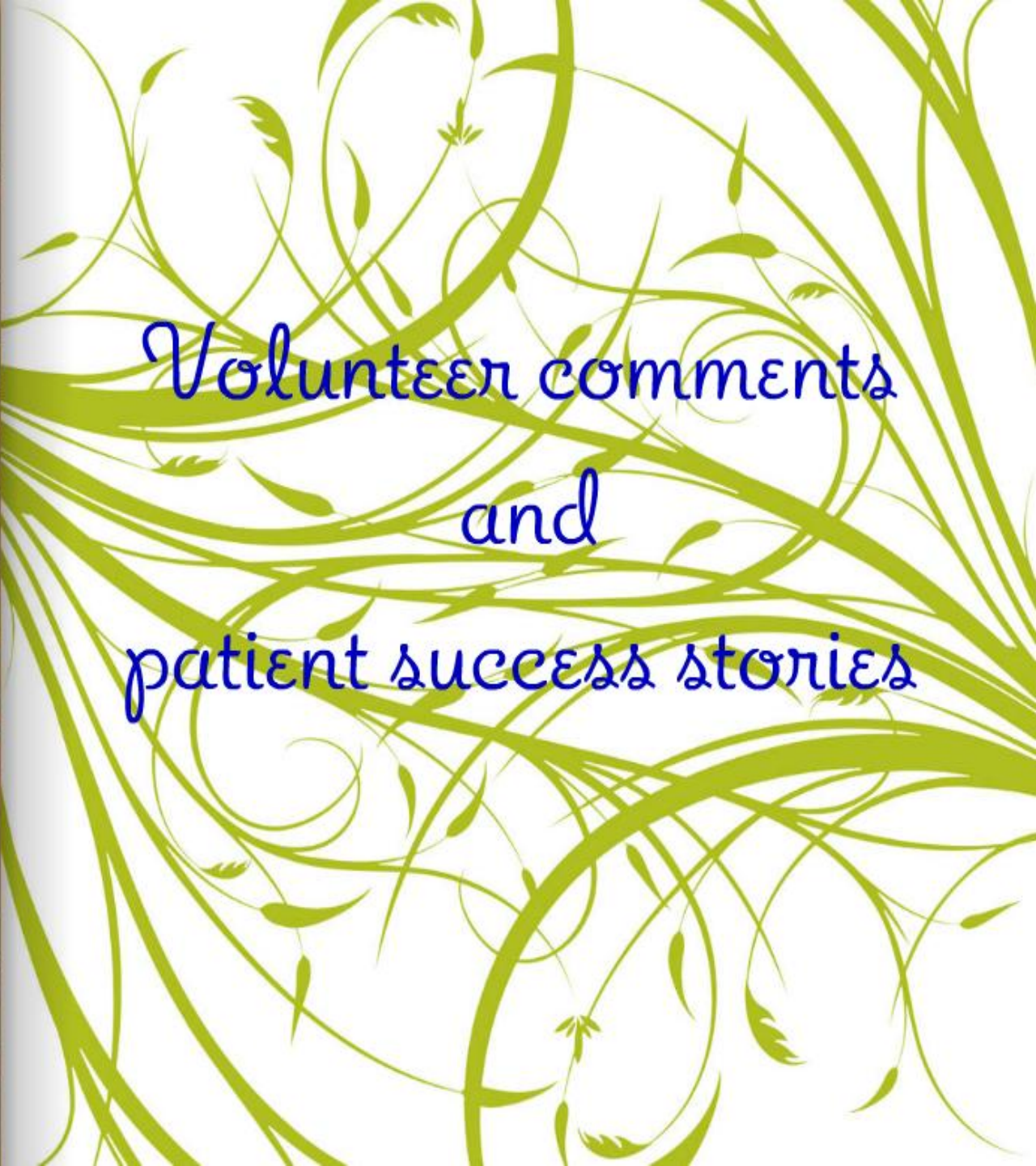








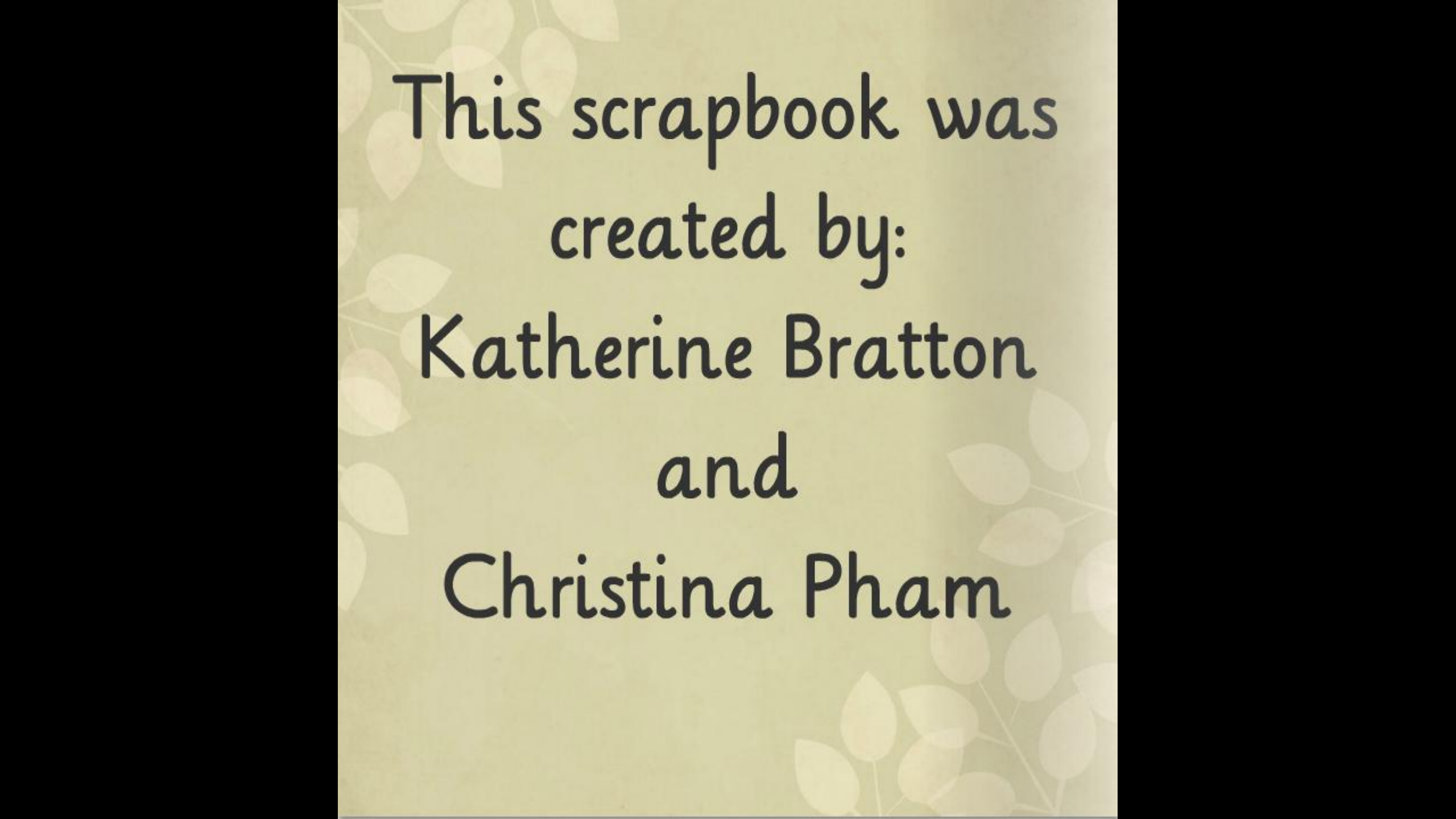
Volunteer comments
and
patient success stories



"After 27 plus years, I am surprisingly hard-pressed to describe my work at the clinic. It is doubtless the best of medicine, and it can also feel like the worst of the human condition. Some days I leave with a very heavy heart, feeling frustrated and defeated, but most days I leave with a smile, having witnessed transformations, large and small, in the lives of folks who are often without hope until they come to us. I believe our lives have purpose; that things come to us for a reason. Apparently, we don't get to see life's big picture until the end, and we must have faith in the meantime. But I'm pretty sure that what we're doing here is the right thing."

**Lisa Molitor Gearen, ARNP
Volunteer Practitioner**

Martha: After 50 years of smoking, Martha's health had been severely compromised for several years from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease complicated by frequent lung infections each winter. The pulmonary problems contributed to other medical problems, making Martha feel progressively worse. After several attempts to quit smoking over the years, she was finally able to "kick the habit" with the aid of patches, counseling and frequent support visits at the clinic. She no longer has to use inhalers and has been able to reduce the amount and cost of her medication. Martha is feeling great!



This scrapbook was
created by:
Katherine Bratton
and
Christina Pham