

A DECADE OF SHARING

by Sandy Goetzinger-Comer

The Stoolmans have something of a family tradition – medical outreach. It's also a tribute that a product of that tradition has been around for more than a decade.

The SHARING Clinic (Student Health Alliance Reaching Indigent Needy Groups), was the brainchild of Sharon Stoolman, M.D., who saw a need in 1996 for an outreach clinic at UNMC run by students.

She was inspired by her mother, Norene Stoolman, a staff nurse at The Nebraska Medical Center, who was committed to outreach visits to underserved communities in the city and abroad.

As a medical student at UNMC, Dr. Stoolman continued the tradition and volunteered at the Open Door Mission clinic and other outreach clinics. She also took a trip to Zaire where she spent eight weeks at a mission hospital.

When she returned, she saw an opportunity to add community outreach to UNMC's curriculum – and the SHARING Clinic was born.

Dr. Stoolman did her research, met with campus leaders, faculty and students, and began to build what has expanded to three clinics that serve both the north and south Omaha communities and involve students from medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy, family medicine therapy, nursing, medical nutrition therapy, clinical laboratory sciences, social work, public health and, most recently, dentistry.

The growth of the SHARING Clinics is really a story of commitment – commitment by the students who provide the care and manage clinic operations, by the UNMC faculty who devote time from their personal schedules to oversee and guide the students, by UNMC leaders who provide the infrastructure and financial support, and by the donors whose funds keep the clinics running.

"I love that it has helped students grow in so many ways," said Dr. Stoolman, who graduated from the College of Medicine in 1999. "I love that they have to make independent management decisions: What are the hours of the clinic? How are we going to get pharmacy supplies? Who is going to staff it?"

Dr. Stoolman completed her residency in pediatrics at UNMC and now serves as assistant professor of pediatrics at UNMC and is a hospitalist at Children's Hospital.

Dr. Stoolman said the SHARING Clinics foster a commitment to outreach and an understanding of poverty that makes future health care providers more compassionate.

"It's not something that most kids are exposed to. They don't understand how people are homeless, how people end up in

poverty, that people in poverty love their children and each other, and they deserve good health care. If you expose people to that, you might actually foster a new generation of volunteers to help with the cause," she said.

SHARING Clinics at a glance

Founded: By UNMC students in 1997.

Mission: Provide high-quality, low-cost health care to the underserved and underinsured populations in Omaha. Provide an outreach opportunity to second-year UNMC students.

Care provided: Since 2002, more than 6,100 patient visits have been recorded at the clinics.

Current clinic schedule:

- SHARING Clinic offers general health care for adults on Tuesdays from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the UNMC Community Health Center, 5155 S. 36th St.;
- RESPECT Clinic provides sexually transmitted disease testing and treatment, including HIV testing and counseling, on Wednesdays from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the UNMC Community Health Center, 5155 S. 36th St.;
- GOODLIFE Clinic offers diabetes treatment and education on Wednesday evenings from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at UNMC Physicians' Baker Place Clinic, 5050 Ames St.

To learn more about the SHARING Clinic, visit unmc.edu/sharing and unmc.edu/connect

Sharon Stoolman, M.D., '99

