

VNA Foundation

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GRASSROOTS AGENCY RECOGNIZED WITH AWARD, CASH GRANT

***Pilsen Homeless Services receives VNA Foundation Anne M. Davis Mobile Health Award
for mobile health program assisting uninsured Hispanic Residents***

CHICAGO, Ill. – October 1, 2013 –

Pilsen Homeless Services has received a special award from Chicago's VNA Foundation for its outstanding work addressing the unique health and social service needs of homeless Hispanic individuals and families. The Anne M. Davis Mobile Health Award, named in honor of a longstanding VNA volunteer and Board member, recognizes a Foundation grantee that *uses mobile health services in a particularly innovative, effective and/or impactful way.*

Individuals without permanent housing face a multitude of healthcare problems as they struggle to survive on the streets and in temporary housing. Pilsen Homeless Services addresses the immediate health needs of thousands of individuals each year, while also providing them with referrals for job placement, substance abuse treatment, and other social services. Because the transient nature of homeless persons often renders them unable to build their own networks, Pilsen Homeless Services' volunteer nurses, doctor, and outreach worker facilitate connections that both promote health and provide care for their patients.

By positioning itself as an intermediary between hospitals and patients, Pilsen Homeless Services is able to find and treat people who otherwise would have sought care in the emergency room—a choice both more expensive and less effective than community-based care. In addition to a clinic that it operates from the Freedom Center on the city's west side, Pilsen Homeless Services' health professionals perform "street outreach," offering care in Chicago's soup kitchens and shelters. An outreach van helps coordinate the education, counseling and referral efforts, and the volunteers who staff the van provide the support necessary for patients to follow through on referrals. "I have been heartened over the years at the degree of improvement some clients make," notes Dr. Maria I. Brown, Volunteer Medical Director. "What they have in common is the ability to re-engage with a system [from which] they had been alienated."

Healthcare services offered through Pilsen Homeless Services are provided by an interdisciplinary team of volunteers. Staffed by a physician, nurse practitioner and community health worker, Pilsen Homeless Services

also provides opportunities for graduate level nurses and medical students from Rush University to learn how to provide healthcare to vulnerable, hard-to-reach patients.

“One of Mrs. Davis’ particular interests was healthcare for the underserved as provided by mobile health units,” said Rob DiLeonardi, Executive Director of the VNA Foundation of Chicago. “She was always rightfully determined that the VNA’s current work accurately reflect its heritage, and viewed the teams of healthcare providers who deliver service on-site via their mobile health vans and buses as perhaps the closest link to the horse-drawn carriages and traveling nurses used by the original Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago.

For this reason, it was the decision of the VNA board that the best way to honor Mrs. Davis’s four decades of service was to create the Anne M. Davis Mobile Health Award, a grant to highlight and honor this particular method of healthcare delivery. There were many strong candidates to receive the Davis Award this year, but Pilsen Homeless Services, which has for many years worked to address the health needs of underserved persons, was the unanimous choice for this distinction. “

About Pilsen Homeless Services

Pilsen Homeless Services (PHS) was founded as a 501(c)3 organization in 1994 in response to the needs of the homeless people in the Pilsen community. Its services have adapted as demographics of the area have changed, and today it offers street outreach and provides care in area soup kitchens, shelters and other settings where people impacted by homelessness congregate. PHS has expanded its reach by working with the Salvation Army Freedom Center where it provides care to homeless people recovering from substance abuse, and it serves a very vulnerable group at the southside Chicago Community Church.

Pilsen Homeless Services is staffed by Maria I. Brown, DO, volunteer Medical Director, Anna Murphy, Nurse Practitioner, Carmen Ortiz, Health Advocate, and Maureen Martin, MSW, Executive director. Volunteers from Rush Medical College also help to provide care, and the students in-turn learn community medicine in an interactive, hands-on setting. PHS emphasizes health education combined with primary care, and by meeting people on their level it tries to restore human dignity. PHS clients are partners in health - everyone is welcome - no one is rushed; and no one is judged. For more information, go to www.pilsenhomeless.com.

About the VNA Foundation

VNA Foundation was founded in 1890 as the Visiting Nurse Association of Chicago, an organization that employed its own nurses and other health professionals to provide health care to the underprivileged. Among its founders was pioneering social activist and Nobel Prize winner Jane Addams.

Since 1995, however, the VNA Foundation has not provided direct nursing services. Instead, VNA has operated exclusively as a grant making foundation, giving financial support to nonprofit organizations offering home- and community-based care to the medically underserved. In FY 2013, the VNA Foundation awarded 62 grants amounting to more than \$2 million. Recipients of the grants include a variety of agencies providing healthcare and health services to the working poor, the homeless, and the disenfranchised. For more information on the VNA Foundation, please visit www.vnafoundation.net.