



Health Care Without Walls
Compassionate care for women and families in need

Health Care Without Walls names new West Street Clinic after Founder and President Dr. Roseanna Means

Oct. 20 Grand Opening Event draws Gov. Baker, Maura Healey, Marylou Sudders

BOSTON, MASS (September 2021) – More than 20 years ago, Dr. Roseanna Means, an attending Senior Staff Physician at Brigham & Women’s Hospital, saw the impact of homelessness on women’s health and founded Health Care Without Walls (HCWW) to directly meet their unique health care needs for free. For years, she and her staff have treated women out of borrowed spaces in women’s shelters.

Once the pandemic hit and the need increased, Dr. Means felt it was imperative to supplement that outreach by opening their own health care clinic where both clinical care and case management services could be consolidated. **On Oct. 20, the new Roseanna Means Clinic at 41 West Street will be dedicated to Dr. Means in recognition of her commitment to providing care and resources to unhoused women and families.**

The Grand Opening Celebration will begin with a morning Ribbon Cutting with Gov. Charlie Baker followed by a Celebratory Reception in the afternoon with **Attorney General Maura Healey and Massachusetts Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders**. Videotaped greetings are expected from **Congresswoman Katherine Clark and Acting Mayor of Boston Kim Janey**. The festivities run from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Emmy Award-winning WCVB TV anchor **Erika Tarantal** will be the emcee.

“With two decades of running Health Care Without Walls while continuing to be a practicing physician, Roseanna has proven time and again that she is fiercely committed to caring for our city’s most vulnerable women,” said William Heald, Chair of the HCWW Board of Directors. “It was a unanimous decision by our board to name this facility after Roseanna and forever dedicate the clinic in her honor. She has been tireless and heroic so we all felt it is very fitting tribute.”

This is a pivotal moment for HCWW, the only NGO in Boston that has dedicated over 20 years to reaching vulnerable women through a unique model of personalized “gap care,” health justice, and advocacy provided in area shelters—all at no cost to clients, thanks in large part to the generosity of donors and foundation support. In addition to the new clinic, which provides the opportunity for HCWW to bring all services under one roof, the organization will continue to do clinical outreach at local women’s shelters and wherever the women feel safe to meet.

A striking 84 percent of women experiencing homelessness develop chronic conditions such as diabetes and asthma, a much higher rate compared to those who are not homeless. Compounding the problem is COVID 19. When Boston’s homeless population was tested broadly for the virus, results showed a 33 percent infection rate with 735 people testing positive among the 2,200 tested. The pandemic highlights the discrepancies in health outcomes for women living in poverty and homelessness, underscoring the need for more help with medical needs as they fall further through the cracks of the health care system.

Dr. Means saw this inequality in medical care and founded Health Care Without Walls in Boston in 1999 to provide women with a free, safe way to receive health care. But it's not simple and straightforward medical care. The staff uniquely address the multitude of gaps in care that exist in the lives of women who are focused on survival. Despite Boston's many healthcare resources, vulnerable women with health problems suffer an array of barriers to getting treatment when they lack stable housing, adequate heat, healthy food, sufficient childcare, personal safety, transportation, and clothing, for example. The chaos and bureaucratic challenges of poverty and homelessness require innovative solutions such as this "safety net below the safety net" to cut through the red tape.

"Our patients represent a population that has long been forgotten—even invisible-- in health care," Dr. Means said. "Our model has always been about equity on every level from our diverse staff to the patients, the majority of whom are women of color, and giving them the best medical care possible. Most of our patients live on the margins. Not all unhoused women use homeless shelters. They may be on the streets, or in a car, or doubled up with family, or remain with an unsafe partner because they do not know where else to go. Homelessness among women is a broader and more complex problem than is portrayed in the stereotypes of mental illness and substance use disorder. It's about the frayed safety net; economic demise after a lifetime of working, raising a family and paying taxes; it's about jobs that don't pay a living wage; and about pervasive trauma and the dire lack of safe housing for abused women. At Health Care Without Walls, we are very grateful that we can now provide high quality care within the walls of our new clinic."

The new 2,148 square foot location is open on weekdays. In addition to "gap care" provided in the wellness clinic, the site is also used for case management for HCWW's intensive case management programs, Bridges to Elders and Bridges to Moms, and for housing search and support. HCWW will continue to meet women in need of care where they feel safe and provide services at local area shelters.

Dr. Means has been on the medical staff of Brigham & Women's Hospital since 1984 and is a Senior Staff Attending Physician in the Division of Women's Health. She is an Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. In 2011, Means was named a [CNN Hero](#) and in 2017 she was recognized as one of Boston's Top Doctor's by *Boston Magazine*. Prior to launching HCWW, Dr. Means was the Program Medical Director of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, where she was also the Medical Director of the Barbara McClinnis House, a residential recuperative facility for the homeless.

"As you can imagine, the health determinants around housing insecurity can be ruinous," Dr. Means said. "We don't just treat the immediate medical condition in front of us – we treat all the contributing factors affecting their well-being. We want women in our care to be physically and emotionally well. That takes real listening, a caring touch, a thoughtful gesture, true empathy, and kindness, qualities that we emphasize."

To learn more about the dedication of the clinic on October 20th visit healthcarewithoutwalls.org/events.

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