This fall we saw the sudden upheaval and devastation to thousands of lives from the massive hurricanes which landed in Texas, the southeastern U.S., the territory of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean islands. We mourn together the losses of property, livelihoods, cherished family, neighbors and friends, and all the dreams that vanished overnight. There but for the grace of God go any of us.

The women and children we care for in our programs have gone through devastating life upheavals. Lives were suddenly destroyed, through no fault of their own, with no hope for a short-term recovery. We meet women who were employed and paying taxes all their lives but lost everything when they couldn’t pay their medical bills and they find themselves in line for breakfast at a shelter at age 64, too ashamed to tell their adult children. It’s not uncommon to meet a woman with untreated mental illness who simply can’t connect the dots, and has no one to steer her on the right path. We visit tiny babies and their anxious moms, offer guidance, reassurance, and practical resources that will help them create a stable home for themselves and their babies.

Recovery from these tragic events involves virtually every aspect of life—housing, transportation, safety mechanisms, medicines and medical care, communications, and social and emotional support. These components comprise “social determinants of health”—not just the health of the body, but of the soul, of the community.

When you give to Health Care Without Walls, you are directly helping the rebuilding of thousands of lives. We are the infrastructure, the first and the ongoing responders. Thanks to you, we will continue to be able to deliver care, to help people feel safe, to find homes, to be good neighbors to those who need it the most.

-- Roseanna Means, MD

Changemakers: 20 Inspiring Women

If you are looking for a source of inspiration in these challenging times, curl up with a copy of “20 Women Changemakers” published by The Women’s Eye and edited by Pamela Burke and Patricia Caso.

This anthology showcases 20 women who are taking action and making a difference in the lives of girls and women around the world.

Featured in the book is Dr. Roseanna Means, and her mission to help homeless women and children. In this interview, first published in 2013, Dr. Means shares the lessons she learned about the challenges and needs of women struggling with homelessness, and how these lessons impacted her own life and drove her to make a difference in the lives of others.

Dr. Means is in good company. Among these 20 women, there are others who are also helping the homeless here in the U.S. by providing portable shelter and showers, and one who created a ‘brilliant bus’ to bring technology to children in poor neighborhoods so they could keep up with their education. There are those who share stories of strength, loss, and perseverance in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Globally, you will meet women who are building schools for girls where none were available, helping Nepali and Chinese orphans, and feeding Syrian refugee children. Girls are being taught to seize control and improve their lives through education, advocacy and leadership training in places like Egypt, Pakistan, and China. There are so many truly inspiring women showcased in “20 Women Changemakers.”

The Women’s Eye website, radio show and podcasts celebrate women who change the world with passion, grit and determination. They have the vision, ideas and the know-how to make the world a better, stronger place for everyone.

If you ever wonder whether one person can really make a difference, these changemakers will show you how it is possible.
Our “Bridges” programs target homeless women with specific characteristics and needs. **Bridges to Moms** helps homeless women who are pregnant. **Bridges to Elders** focuses on those who are aged 60 or older and struggling with health and housing.

To start the day, Adelina and Jeannie sit together at Women’s Lunch Place to strategize how to best help one of the guests obtain needed medical care. Adelina is a Community Health Worker, and Jeannie is a Nurse Practitioner—together, they help our older clients overcome the myriad of obstacles preventing them from getting needed care and services.

One such woman, “Helen,” was uninsured and a ‘frequent flyer’ at area Emergency Rooms. “Helen” had a history of medical and psychiatric issues, but had been rejected by Medicaid due to bureaucratic glitches in her applications. With Adelina’s determined and persistent efforts, “Helen” was able to get MassHealth insurance. Now, she is on medication, has a primary care physician who works closely with Jeannie and Adelina, is signed up for SNAP (food assistance), and even received much needed dental care. And “Helen” is no longer a regular visitor at area Emergency Rooms.

Our initial goal was to help 20 women. To date, Adelina and Jeannie have helped more than 75 women aged 60 or older, and that number is expected to grow another 25% to 100 women next year.

Adelina tirelessly reaches out to the women and helps them navigate the various insurance and support systems that are available, as well as scheduling and attending medical and other appointments. Jeannie is able to monitor and oversee ongoing care and medication practices, offer guidance with complex medical issues, and serves as a liaison to medical providers on behalf of our clients.

Through their compassionate guidance and support, Adelina and Jeannie give these women a voice in their care that had previously not been heard, improving their lives in real and meaningful ways.

The homeless are particularly susceptible to complications and even death from contracting influenza. Many of the women we see are elderly, suffer from one or more health conditions, and spend much of their time in crowded shelters or exposed to the harsh New England climate. For these women, the annual flu shot can be a life-saving vaccination.

But not everyone believes in getting a flu shot. Patty will tell anyone who will listen all of the reasons why she will never get a flu shot. This is where Leah stepped in. Leah was a nursing student at the MGH Institute of Health Professions. She was training at our clinic at Women’s Lunch Place to learn about the medical needs—from diagnosis to treatment—of the homeless.

One of the most important steps in treating the homeless is building trust. So Leah sat with Patty and listened, and answered her questions, and listened some more. At the end of their time together, Patty understood that a flu shot could protect her from serious illness. Leah had heard her concerns and allayed her fears. But there was only one person she would trust that day. So Leah and Patty celebrated their joint learning experience... with a flu shot.

Our medical training programs with the MGH Institute for Health Professionals, Regis College Center for Health Sciences, and Harvard Medical School are preparing tomorrow’s professionals to treat the homeless with the compassion and respect they so deserve.
Health Care Without Walls

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) began a 5-year study on May 1, 2017, of how to best serve those whose medical needs are not being fully met by the traditional clinical care environment. This is in recognition of the fact that health related social needs (i.e., homelessness) lead to unnecessary health care spending without corresponding improvements in health and well being.

This $157 million study will test the impact of an array of interventions by 32 diverse ‘hub’ organizations across the country, impacting hundreds of thousands of people in need of supportive services.

Health Care Without Walls has shown that this type of bridge care does in fact improve health outcomes and save money when caring for homeless elderly women; our initial study funded by the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation from 2011 to 2013 led to the creation of our Bridges to Elders program. Our Bridges to Moms program, in collaboration with the Brigham and Women’s Hospital, includes a study funded by the Rx Foundation on the impact of bridge care for homeless women who are pregnant. We are in the process of tabulating the data and look forward to assessing the results in the coming months.

This Accountable Health Communities model is a promising step in line with the beliefs and results we at HCWW have known and experienced for almost 20 years.

“...more than what happens inside a doctor’s office, and that’s why, for the first time, we are testing whether screening patients for health-related social needs and connecting them to local community resources like housing and transportation to the doctor will ultimately improve their health and reduce costs…”

- Sylvia M. Burwell
Former Secretary
Health and Human Services

Social Determinants of Health

There are many factors that impact our health and individual risk of disease, ranging from family history and genetics to personal behaviors such as diet, exercise, alcohol / drug use, and even whether or not we wear seatbelts in our cars.

Beyond those individual elements are a host of outside factors which significantly effect overall health and wellbeing. These are referred to as social determinants of health, and they often reflect areas outside the ones managed by traditional health care systems that are often beyond one’s control.

Housing is one such determinant. We see the effect of homelessness or housing instability on women and children every day. This is why our Community Health Workers are so instrumental in helping our clients overcome these barriers to health in conjunction with the care they receive in our clinics.

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www.healthcarewithoutwalls.org
Or mail checks to
HCWW at
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Wellesley, MA 02482

Shopping online for the holidays? Don’t forget to use Amazon Smile and Amazon will donate to Health Care Without Walls.
Baby Goes Home In Style... With Love

Thanks to the handiwork of dedicated knitters, our Bridges to Moms newborns are leaving the hospital wrapped in blankets and hats loved and supported by the Health Care Without Walls Community.

Our Baby Goes Home kit includes all the basics a newborn needs — diapers, wipes, bath sets, pajamas, bibs, a diaper bag, as well as a car seat and stroller if needed. Everything is packaged in an innovative Baby Box, a simple, portable sleeping space designed for the baby’s comfort and safety.

As the name suggests, this box and mattress set provide a compact, portable, and safe place for the baby to sleep.

Inspired by a Finnish tradition, there are now multiple U.S. states (Alabama, New Jersey, and Ohio) who provide every newborn with a Baby Box. Where ever the mom finds shelter, the baby will have a safe place for the first six months of life.

Bridges to Moms newborns face many challenges, but at least they know that they are loved and supported by the Health Care Without Walls Community.

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Don’t Forget the Socks!

With the cold weather upon us, keeping warm and healthy depends on the most basic necessities. Socks, and warm, dry feet, are a key component to enduring the winter elements for the homeless.

Please consider donating socks (men’s XL white tube socks work best). Hold a collection drive at work, school, or your next gathering of any kind.

It’ll warm you inside and out.
From head to toe.

Are you on our email mailing list? Don’t miss out on the latest news and updates! Be sure to give us your email address — send it to info@healthcarewithoutwalls.org.

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