

## Medical student open free clinic for the needy

By Long Hwa-shu For Sun-Times Media | March 4, 2014 | 7:16 PM



Rosalind Franklin medical student and clinic manager Steve Fisher checks the blood pressure of Denise Nunez. | Tina Johansson/For Sun-Times Media

### Clinic Fundraiser

To raise money to fund the clinic, which is currently on a shoe-string budget, the students will hold an inaugural benefit at 6 p.m., Saturday, April 5, at the Glen Rowan House at Lake Forest College, 555 N. Sheridan Road, Lake Forest.

The event will include a dinner, music and a silent auction. Tickets at \$75 per person and can be purchased by calling (847) 578-8354 or by visiting <https://rfums.wufoo.com/forms/interprofessional-community-clinic-benefit/>.

### About the clinic

The clinic at 3471 Green Bay Road, North Chicago, is open from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. every Thursday. For an appointment, call 847-578-8501.

Hannah Lee, a second-year medical student at the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine & Science in North Chicago, had an idea back in January 2013: Why not start a student-run free clinic for the needy as a learning experience?

“I saw the need in the community. They are people who are medically underserved or not served at all,” said Lee, 27, a Korean-American from Los Angeles.

She talked to three of her fellow students — all women. They all agreed it was a brilliant idea. So she broached the idea to Dr. Douglas Reifler,

associate dean of the Chicago Medical School, one of the five colleges at the university in North Chicago.

Nine months later, in September, Inter-professional Community Clinic was born. Since opening, the clinic, which sees patients only on Thursdays between 4 and 8 p.m., has more than 100 patients.

“More are expected when the word gets around,” said Steve Fisher, a fellow medical student, who is the clinic’s manager and oversees its community outreach program.

Many of those who found their way to the clinic had not seen a doctor before, according to him.

The clinic offers patients free medical, podiatric, psychological and physical therapy services under the supervision of faculty members. To be added will be women’s health. Patients, however, pay for their prescriptions.

Lee couldn’t believe the support the clinic has received from the university. Not only backing it financially, the university has allowed the clinic to

use the needed space — four rooms in a building, a former mansion, at 3471 Green Bay Road. The students also get to use the labs. In addition, the clinic has received faculty support with some professors acting as advisers for the students. They are also present at the clinic to keep a critical eye on them.

“It is important for the students to see, learn and practice how to take care of the medical needs of people who are not as fortunate as they are,” said Dr. Lecia Apantaku, assistant dean and an associate professor of surgery.

“We have a free rein to run the clinic,” said Lee, one of the clinic’s four founding members who got the ball rolling.

The others are Mia Hua, Svetlana Kozlovich and Sarah Hershman, all in their second year at the medical school. The clinic, they stressed, is “committed to providing the most comprehensive and highest quality care free of charge.”

Asked why all the founders are women, Hua, of Chinese heritage, noted that the four are friends in the first place and “we talk to one another.” Jokingly, she observed, “Men tend to be loners.”

The clinic has become a cause célèbre on the campus. As many as 300 students have volunteered to serve in the clinic, nearly tripling the number of patients.

Because of that, patients are getting extra care. In addition to offering them the care and treatment they seek, they are given more comprehensive care including psychological or drug counseling when needed.

Asked if the need for the clinic remains under Obamacare because everyone is supposed to have insurance coverage, Hershman pointed out that many illegal immigrants may not be covered.

“We want to catch those who are otherwise falling into the cracks,” she said.

Kozlovich, 27, who came to this country from Moldova, part of the former Soviet Union, believes, because of the language barrier, many immigrants have difficulty in finding the right agency that can help them. Because many who come to the clinic are Hispanics who do not speak English, the students see to it that they have translators on hand to bridge the barrier.

Calling the creation of the clinic “an invaluable learning experience,” Thuy Le, who is on the fund-raising committee, said, “We hope it will continue to grow and serve the community well beyond our tenure as students.”