THE PHYSICIAN VOLUNTEER

Arthur F. Bickford, M.D., Honored
2005 Senior Volunteer Physician of the Year

For the past nine years, the Massachusetts Medical Society’s Committee on Senior Volunteer Physicians has honored a senior volunteer physician of the year. Candidates for this award are nominated by their peers and selected by the Committee on Senior Volunteer Physicians. Among the criteria to be considered for the award are that candidates must be MMS members, 60 years of age or older, and have demonstrated a commitment to volunteerism and dedication to sharing experience and medical expertise with communities in Massachusetts. In 2002, the MMS House of Delegates formally recognized the Senior Physician Volunteer Award and annually honors a senior volunteer physician as part of the Annual Meeting proceedings at the Awards Luncheon.

The recipient of the 2005 Senior Volunteer Physician of the Year Award is Arthur F. Bickford, M.D.

Dr. Bickford’s career as a volunteer began in India at a hospital in the Nandi Hills north of Bangalore. While there, Dr. Bickford realized that there were not enough doctors on earth to meet the needs of the public, much less deliver needed preventive health measures to the world’s peoples.

Shortly after his return from India, an opportunity to volunteer at the homeless shelter in Hyannis was presented to Dr. Bickford. Along with Dr. Herbert Mathewson, the medical director of

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Cape Cod Hospital, they began to see patients one evening per week using a rotating staff of volunteer physicians. At that time, the clinic was named the O’Neill Center, and as it grew, the clinic’s mission expanded to include the homeless, uninsured, underinsured, and the at-risk population of Cape Cod.

There were not enough physicians available to staff this rapidly growing clinic. A decision was made to make the clinic a nurse practitioner-run clinic. This gave the clinic a decidedly holistic approach to care. In addition to housing and job placement services, chiropractic, dental, nutrition, mental health, and substance abuse treatment services were offered as well.

Volunteer physicians sponsored by the MMS became a part of the clinic about five years ago. The clinic is currently staffed by two volunteer internists, a family practice physician, a dermatologist, a surgeon, and a neurosurgeon. The clinic has expanded to three sites connected by electronic medical records. The clinic served over 26,000 patients last year, and has been doing business as the Duffy Health Center. This Center has a long history of volunteerism at all levels.

James J. A. Cavanaugh, M.D., wrote in his nomination letter, “Dr. Bickford has been a tireless worker for the homeless and underserved populations of Cape Cod. He has worked during the past 10 years in many capacities serving the needs of our uninsured and the disenfranchised in our society. During his tenure as director of these programs, he has expanded tremendously the services and the numbers of those served so that critical health services are a reality for the many who for countless reasons otherwise would be without care.”

Dr. Bickford currently serves as the medical director of the O’Neill/Duffy Clinic in Hyannis, the medical director for the E. P. Duffy Clinic in Plymouth, the medical director of Pleasant Bay Nursing Home in Brewster, and the medical director for Bickford Health Associates in Yarmouthport.

The Massachusetts Medical Society is pleased to recognize Arthur F. Bickford, M.D., as the 2005 Senior Physician Volunteer of the Year.

Congratulations!

MMS Committee on Senior Volunteer Physicians Seeks New Members

The Committee on Senior Volunteer Physicians is actively seeking new members to join the Committee. The mission of the Committee is to utilize the experience and skills of senior/retired physicians to fulfill medical and health education needs of Massachusetts communities via one of its three established programs:

Health Center. This program makes it possible for licensed and insured volunteer physicians to provide health care to uninsured and underserved populations, in large part through its provision of professional liability insurance.

Mentorship. The Committee continues its mentorship program, working in collaboration with the Boston University School of Medicine. This program enables volunteer physicians to serve as facilitators for courses offered to first- and second-year medical students via its Integrated Problems Course. Other mentorship programs are available as well.

Education Outreach. Over the past several years, the Committee has explored various opportunities for retired physicians to volunteer their time in the Massachusetts public school system. This past year, the Committee collaborated with Northeastern University’s Project RE-SEED (Retirees Enhancing Science Education through Experiments and Demonstrations). This program prepares individuals with science backgrounds to assist middle school teachers with science and math teaching.

Meetings are held approximately every six weeks on Tuesdays at 5:00 p.m. at Massachusetts Medical Society Headquarters in Waltham. Please contact Erin Riley at (800) 322-2303, ext. 7413, or via e-mail at eriley@mms.org if you are interested in attending a meeting.

Project RE-SEED

Northeastern University’s RE-SEED program is looking for retired physicians to work as volunteers to provide classroom support to middle school science teachers. Training programs will take place in Boston, Worcester, and Methuen this winter and spring. To learn more about the RE-SEED program, please contact Deirdre Weedon at (617) 373-5860 or d.weedon@neu.edu, or visit www.reseed.neu.edu.
**Reaching Out to a Physician in Need**

Physician Health Services, Inc. (PHS) is searching for physicians who can volunteer a small amount of their time to serve as a supportive monitor for a colleague in need. PHS is a 501(c)(3) subsidiary corporation of the Massachusetts Medical Society designed to provide identification, support, and monitoring services to physicians in Massachusetts who are experiencing or are at risk for health related concerns, including substance use disorders, physical illnesses, and behavioral and mental health problems.

At times, it is determined that a physician would benefit from a supportive monitoring contract that solicits the input of a colleague monitor. Physicians under contract meet weekly, on average, with their designated monitors, who provide support and feedback on a physician’s progress. Physicians that are working are typically able to identify willing monitors in their hospitals or practice settings. However, physicians who are not currently working, perhaps because they are taking time off to address their health during a medical leave or because they are meeting licensure requirements, are often in need of volunteer physician monitors who live or work nearby.

The collegial support of a physician willing to serve in the role of a monitor can be the very conduit necessary to get an ailing physician back on his or her feet. Monitors are asked to see the contracting physician on a regular basis (no less than weekly) for a brief discussion to assess the physician’s well-being and to provide support. The monitors are then asked to provide regular updates to PHS. The monitor will have ongoing access to a PHS associate director for guidance and will be asked to complete brief quarterly reports. All information provided by a monitor remains confidential.

Please take this opportunity to reflect on how you may be helpful to a colleague in need.

To volunteer to be a monitor to a colleague in your hospital or practice, or to find out more about being a monitor, please call PHS at (781) 434-7404. You can also visit our website for more information about PHS at www.physicianhealth.org.

*Luis T. Sanchez, M.D.*
*Director, Physician Health Services, Inc.*

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**Committee Hosts Free Health Care Forum**

This past fall, the Committee hosted a free health care forum. The purpose of the forum was to provide an opportunity for physician volunteers and others involved in free health care to share the experiences and challenges they have encountered as they strive to deliver care to communities in need. Speakers included Fred Panitz, M.D., from Volunteers in Health Care Berkshires, Arthur Bickford, M.D., from the Duffy Health Center, and Cynthia Mitchell from Island Health Care. Recipients of insurance from the Committee’s Health Center Program and others interested in caring for underserved communities were in attendance.

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**Physician Volunteer Fair**

The seventh annual Physician Volunteer Fair will allow physicians an opportunity to meet with representatives from a variety of volunteer organizations to explore the many ways to donate time, energy, and expertise in local communities or around the world.

*Thursday, May 12, 2005, 7:00–9:00 p.m.*
*Seaport Hotel, Boston*
*To register, please call (800) 322-2303, ext. 7206.*
Health Center Program Spotlight
Women of Means

In the early part of the 20th century, it was a common practice among physicians to offer their services pro bono in almshouses and other programs for the poor. During the past 25 years, with the emergence of managed care, business models of cost-effective health delivery, and productivity and efficiency goals, medical schools and training programs have moved away from the concept of community service.

For this reason among others, in 1999, I launched a new organization called Women of Means, Inc. My goal was to examine how we make assumptions about the delivery of health care to persons who are compromised in so many ways, and apply our “build it and they will come” philosophy to our care of people for whom even basic transportation can present a huge obstacle. I also wanted to invite my colleagues to re-examine the role of volunteerism in our professional lives, and I hoped that I could initiate a dialogue about the importance of teaching our students and residents about the critical role of “going to them” instead of expecting them to come to us.

Women of Means has launched this model and has been increasingly successful. Our organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose entire budget is donated from foundations and individuals. We have a team of physicians, mid-level practitioners, and nurse case managers. We visit 10 shelters in the Boston area. We supplement our care with over-the-counter medical supplies such as ibuprofen, ace bandages, cough syrup, and vitamins. We have a license from the state DPH to provide a few helpful diagnostic tests (rapid strep, urine analysis, urine pregnancy, and blood sugar testing). Our doctors and nurses provide care for everything from low birth weight to pregnancy to depression. We have placed asthma nebulizers in all the family shelters. All the tests and asthma equipment help the women and children get immediate relief and cut down on ER use. In 2004, we recorded almost 5,000 clinical encounters.

Every physician is carefully screened, educated, and oriented to the world of homelessness. Each volunteer has to commit to at least one year; most stay longer. Every physician is required to have an active license and to have malpractice coverage.

Since 2000, the Massachusetts Medical Society has been an active partner in the success of Women of Means. The MMS was the first to offer to help Women of Means recruit physicians. Through the help of the MMS and Alliance Charitable Foundation, we have been able to recruit, educate, and train half of our physician staff. In addition, through their Committee on Senior Physicians, the MMS has been able to underwrite the cost of malpractice insurance for the physicians who are not otherwise able to get it because they are not doing other clinical activities at this stage in their lives.

If you are interested in volunteering in the Women of Means Program, please e-mail wom@womenofmeans.org or call (781) 239-0290.

Roseanna H. Means, M.D.
Executive/Medical Director, Women of Means, Inc.