

Lawndale Christian Health Center  
**2024 Spring Newsletter**



LAWNDALE CHRISTIAN  
**HEALTH CENTER**  
*Loving God. Loving People.*

## Letter from the CEO

Dear Friends of LCHC,

If there is anything we can learn from living and serving in a community with many generations, it is to not take our elders for granted. Their wisdom, stories, humor, and perspective are a necessary part of a thriving community. Yet too many seniors don't have access to the care they need to age at home. They end up moving out of the neighborhood for care when, with the right support, they could continue to be active in their communities and thrive late into life.

As we continue to grow our services for seniors, I think often of my late parents, Mary and James Brooks, and the kind of care and support I would have wanted for them. I would have loved to see them be part of our Senior Day Services, our Senior Clinic, and our upcoming Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), which will start this June. These programs are just a few examples of how we as a health center provide wrap-around services for our seniors that can completely change someone's experience of aging. It's the kind of care we dream of for our loved ones.

The benefits of social interaction, daily movement, fun activities, outings, and quality medical care are impossible to ignore. Many of our participants tell us that without our program they would be stuck at home, much less mobile, and likely facing depression and loneliness. The impact of seemingly small things can be the difference between someone resigning themselves to the hardships of aging or living a long life of abundance.

In this newsletter you will read about our new PACE program and hear the stories of two seniors in our community who have found hope and restoration through friendship, exercise, and giving back to their community.

Thank you for your ongoing support that has allowed us to expand these life-giving services. We are deeply grateful.

In Christ,



James Brooks, DMin, MDiv  
CEO, Lawndale Christian Health Center



Portraits of LCHC's Senior Day Services participants.

# Newfound Family



What does it mean to age well? Sometimes it means accepting the losses and challenges of life with grace, resilience, and an unwavering spirit.

For two years, Mr. Wu has lived in one of the many beds in the Franciscan Harrison shelter. His story living here began with a stroke that robbed him of his livelihood as a chef, just as the pandemic swept through, leaving restaurant jobs scarce. In the past, Mr. Wu would manage three giant woks at a well-known Chinese university kitchen. Now, Mr. Wu struggles with several medical complications including heart disease, temporary right-side paralysis, and a compression fracture in his lower spine.

As time went on, Mr. Wu, now 76, found himself grappling with loneliness as he spoke limited English and frustration as he slowly lost his memory and control over his circumstances. However, each week Mr. Wu eagerly anticipated the arrival of LCHC's Mobile Health Team, and Physician Assistant Anna Ji, knowing it was a rare opportunity to communicate in Mandarin. Though often reliant on a phone interpreter, the act of speaking in his first language to a provider brought a sense of comfort amidst the chaos.



Soon, Anna introduced him to fellow Mandarin speakers, including Dr. Hope Chen, an incoming Lawndale Family Medicine Resident, and her husband, a chef with a passion for Chinese cuisine.

In February 2024, just after Chinese New Year, Mr. Wu found himself in a new-found family, including members of a local Chinese church congregation, and his medical team of Anna Ji, PA-C, Michael Kim, FNP, Mary Ellen Jones, APN, and Dr. Thomas Huggett. They all gathered around a table laden with dumplings.



Through LCHC, Mr. Wu found a pathway to healing, connection to a community, and access to emotional and spiritual support. Mr. Wu's unwavering spirit has inspired our staff to continue to seek out the best ways to connect with patients, forging bonds that celebrate language and culture.

# Moving Over, Not Moving Out

Many life transitions are marked by physical relocation, like moving out of your childhood home. We move for different reasons; for education, work, or marriage. Sometimes, though, as we age, we're forced to move for medical reasons, like seeking better care. LCHC's vision is that none of our senior residents must leave the community prematurely to get the support they need.

Fifteen years ago, Steve Braxton moved to Lawndale in search of better healthcare and community. A retired US Naval Intelligence Officer from the Vietnam War, Steve was in a lot of pain and discomfort from exposure to "agent orange," more commonly known as mustard gas. He was battling peripheral neuropathy, crippling joint pain, inflammation, and occasional stabbing chest pain. His first appointment with Dr. Hassan Naom, at Lawndale Christian Health Center's Homan Square Clinic, revealed diabetes and hypertension as well. Despite the diagnoses, Steve resolved to follow Dr. Naom's advice to change his eating and exercise habits.

LCHC's first gym was in a small room, and Brian Gannon, now LCHC's Wellness Director, was a staff member at the time. Brian did a full assessment and prescribed a workout regimen tailored to Steve's ailments. Over time, Steve formed a close bond with Brian and his wife, Truly. Steve was one of the first people to know Brian and Truly were expecting their first child, and still refers to Brian's son, Aiden, as his "surrogate grandson."

Steve not only embraced the Gannon family but also the Lawndale community. Drawing upon his vast experience as a pastor, bishop, corporate CEO, and author, Steve became involved in various community initiatives. He is part of the Lawndale 5K, Lawndale housing projects, mentoring at-risk youth, participating in restorative justice peace circles, and serving on community boards, among many other endeavors. Steve calls this work his pride and joy.



"Some people think that when you get older, you should give up, accept the condition that you're in and not do anything about it. So, one of the things I said when I retired is that I wasn't moving out, just moving over." Steve shares. Moving over means asking yourself "what's next?"

At 83, Steve continues to be a vital presence in the community. He sees Dr. Naom at least once a month, and works out 2.5 hours a day, 6 days a week at Lawndale Christian Fitness Center. You can see him cooking hot dogs for LCHC's Back to School Bash, making his famous Louisiana jambalaya for a block party, or leading a historical tour for visitors. Steve exemplifies resilience and dedication to serving others in Lawndale. With LCHC's senior services, resources, and upcoming PACE program, we hope every older community member will have the opportunity to thrive just like Steve.

# Filling in the Gaps with PACE



While the wisdom, insights, and experiences of seniors are an often-overlooked community asset, Lawndale Christian Health Center (LCHC) treasures its older patients. LCHC already supports aging adults through many programs like its Senior Day Services and in June 2024 is implementing a new, evidence-based model of senior care called PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly).

LCHC's Clinical Services Director and Physician Assistant Lisa Werner serves older patients in hospital, inpatient, outpatient, home visit, and hospice settings. She has always taken an interest in caring for the elderly. Lisa recently received a peer-nominated staff recognition award for her impactful care of seniors. "There is something deeply wonderful about journeying with patients to the very end of life. It's an underrecognized, beautiful place to practice." She has been essential to PACE thus far whether she is "thinking of different program modalities to give people Good Days" or facilitating provider and patient learning opportunities. "I want trainees to appreciate the great things that happen as you age and give patients the opportunity to influence a young doctor who will care for elderly folks," she says.

PACE is a system of care used nationwide, and LCHC will be launching the first one in Illinois. Instead of private or public insurance organizations paying for senior healthcare, a participant's health center (LCHC) pays for and provides all necessary care to participating patients. LCHC contracts directly with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services for payment, ensuring complete alignment of incentives and outcomes.

"The whole point of PACE," says Lisa, "is to find those patients who can stay safely in the community with some additional support. PACE fills in the gaps around homemaking and medical services." In practice, PACE allows seniors to "age in place." Given the clear connection between participating in community and individual wellbeing, PACE not only prevents early displacement of senior citizens into nursing homes, but also brings seniors together in a full-service Senior Center where a diverse group of specialists meet daily to discuss holistic patient health.

LCHC's PACE program expands the conversation around geriatric healthcare and will deeply impact older participants and families like those in this newsletter. Through PACE, LCHC will assist even more patients in aging well within their own community.

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