

Lubbock, Texas, home to the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, has a population of over 200,000 people. According to the 2000 US census, 46,251 people in Lubbock County were uninsured. There are a few sliding scale medical clinics in Lubbock that do great work, but there was no place that offered the uninsured physician care at no cost. The city of Lubbock, the state of Texas, and the county hospital do offer indigent care programs but all too often those who qualify simply do not know about these programs.

In early 2008, Peter Wu and Sudha Bhadriraju, two first year medical students from the Class of 2011, recognized the need for a completely free medical clinic that could provide basic healthcare to the working poor and homeless of Lubbock as well as help them get plugged into the existing healthcare system. The clinic would equally serve as an educational experience for the medical students as a place where they could practice their clinical skills and provide a service to their community. With the help of School of Medicine professor, pediatrician, and community advocate, Dr. Patti Patterson, Wu and Bhadriraju met with numerous local organizations in order to find a community partner for the student-run free clinic. After meetings with many organizations, they met Dan Reynolds, executive director and co-founder of Lubbock Impact, Inc., a local 501(c) organization focused on meeting the needs of the working poor and homeless. The medical students and Dan Reynolds quickly found out that their mutual vision, goals, aspirations, and desire to build a free medical clinic were concordant, and they decided to partner together.

In February 2008, Wu and Bhadriraju recruited Brian Mahmood to the leadership team. Mahmood had just been accepted into the TTUHSC School of Medicine Class of 2012 and was in the final year of his undergraduate education at TTUHSC. The three medical students, along with Dan Reynolds and Ryan Bullard of Lubbock Impact, set out to find a medical director for the future free clinic. After almost a year of research, phone calls, emails, and countless meetings, Dr. Kelly Bennett, Medical Director of TTU Student Health and faculty member of the TTUHSC Family Medicine department, agreed to become the medical director of the student-run free clinic in January 2009. Dr. Bennett brought to the team clinical Department Administrator of Student Health, Juli McCauley, who became the legal coordinator, and Dr. Fiona Prabhu, who signed on as the Assistant Medical Director. With Dr. Bennett at the helm the team met with Dr. Steven Berk, Dean of the School of Medicine. He gave his approval and support to establish the student-run free clinic on February 27, 2009. After leading the effort to establish the student-run free clinic, Wu and Bhadriraju handed student leadership over to Mahmood to lead the student side of building the clinic and turn the idea into a reality. He recruited Carlos Ortiz and Revathi Ravi, both from the SOM Class of 2012, to fill the new leadership team positions. With Dr. Bennett leading the way, the new team was tasked with finding donations of equipment and supplies, developing protocol, recruiting physicians and medical student volunteers, stocking, and countless other tasks required to build a clinic. Lubbock Impact renovated an old choir room in a wing of their building into a full functioning clinic complete with four exam rooms, two triage centers, nurses' station, a waived laboratory, and a waiting room.

The team could not have accomplished the establishment of the free clinic without the help and support of countless individuals and departments at TTUHSC and the Lubbock community. Dean Steven Berk and the Assistant Dean for Administration, Bryce McGregor, provided significant support to the establishment and the continual running of the student-run free clinic.

On August 5, 2009, the Lubbock Impact/TTUHSC Free Clinic officially opened its doors for service. The first month saw a total of 54 patients come through the free clinic. The free clinic served 388 patients in its first six months of operation with a total of 479 total visits. The free clinic has seen increased growth over the months and typically sees 25-30 patients a week with over 100 patient visits a month. As of April 2010, the free clinic has seen 521 patients with a total of 696 visits. The free clinic is extraordinarily popular with the medical students of TTUHSC. Volunteer registration typically fills up within hours of being opened and is booked months in advance. Medical students from all four classes have volunteered in the free clinic.

The students, physicians and staff realize that their work is not over until no patient needs to visit a free clinic. The volunteers are constantly working on improving the clinic for patient care and for student education. The free clinic is a place where people of all different backgrounds come together to achieve the same goal, to serve humanity and better their community. A quote by Rabindranath Tagore, hung by the founding leadership team on one of the free clinic walls summarizes the attitude and atmosphere in the Lubbock Impact/TTUHSC Free Clinic; "I slept and dreamt life was a joy. I awoke and found that life was a service. I acted and behold, service was a joy."

Founders:

Kelly Bennett, MD
Sudha Bhadriraju, SOM Class of 2011
Ryan Bullard, Lubbock Impact
Brian Mahmood, SOM Class of 2012
Dan Reynolds, Lubbock Impact
Peter Wu, SOM Class of 2011