Snow keeps falling after over 6 feet of snow has already hit Boston in under 3 weeks time.

SNOW FALLS COMMUNITY CALLS

Boston has never seen a winter like this. The onslaught of consecutive snow storms has managed to drop a total of 90.8 inches from January 9 to February 17, 2015. This breaks Boston’s 30-day snowfall record from 1978 of 58.8 inches. The impact to the city, our economy and the day-to-day life of our residents has been extremely taxing and frustrating. Between school closings, public transit delays and shutdowns, and the strenuous work of shoveling, it has been a tough winter.

In the midst of these challenges though, the staff at Codman Square Health Center has done our best to continue providing care and services for our neighbors. With staff at times walking miles through the snow to reach the Health Center during times of MBTA closures or delays and city parking bans, Codman has only seen one work day where we were unable to see patients. Though turnout has not been high during the blizzards, Codman has been committed to providing access for local community members, with over 1,700 visits happening in the midst of the blizzards of January 26, February 2, 9 and 15. A number of these visits were acute visits and required summoning an ambulance to transport the patient to a nearby hospital. Codman will continue to keep its doors open as much as possible throughout this difficult winter to ensure the health of our neighborhood is cared for.
Codman Square Health Center hosted its annual Holiday Gift Giveaway for our Pediatric Patients on Saturday, December 13 in the Great Hall. Over 400 kids ages 1 to 10 were provided wrapped gifts to enjoy for the holidays. The gifts were generously donated by Notre Dame Academy and Toys for Tots who have both continued to make this great event possible year after year. Over 76 volunteers gave their time to transport, wrap and organize the presents, including a stellar team who distributed the gifts at the event. Also this year, as part of the Codman’s Partnership, Codman Academy Charter Public School student families were also invited to sign-up and participate in the giveaway.

THE LAUNCH OF TEAM BASED CARE

By Karen Schoenherr

In March 2014, Codman Square Health Center (CSHC) launched a new Team Based Care (TBC) training program for all Primary Care staff. Primary Care Providers, Nurses, and Medical Assistants meet twice a month for an hour, with the goal of working together to roll out new practice transformation initiatives while improving teamwork within the clinical units. Over the months, the curriculum has varied from team-building and communication exercises, Performance Improvement lessons, and roll-outs of new Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) workflows. In September, each clinical unit began an improvement project focused on one of two quality measures: (1) foot exams for diabetic patients or (2) pediatric weight assessment, nutritional counseling, and physical activity counseling. Each team was given time to work together on how they would impact the measure, and within two months, all five teams achieved significant improvements. Internal Medicine and Family Medicine’s Blue Team collectively increased their rate of diabetes foot exam from 45% to 72%. The Pediatrics Department, Family Medicine’s Green Team, and Family Medicine’s Purple Team improved pediatric weight assessment from 86% to 98%. Physical activity counseling increased from 46% to 88%; and nutritional counseling improved from 58% to 87% as well. At the end of the two month period, each team shared their successes and best practices.

After the team projects’ success in 2014, TBC rung in the New Year by rolling out universal depression screening for primary care adult patients. The two TBC trainings in January were dedicated to introducing the new depression workflow and bringing our primary care and behavioral health staff together to share best practices. In the coming weeks and months, primary care staff will receive data on how their teams are improving depression screening rates, with an initial screening goal of 50%. We are excited to watch the continued success of our teams as we monitor our quality measures on an ongoing basis and introduce new projects.

FOOD ASSISTANCE AT THE HOLIDAYS

More than 11 percent of Massachusetts families live in food insecure homes, which means that approximately 700,000 people in Massachusetts don’t know where their next meal is coming from.

In a continuing effort to support families and individuals in our community, Codman Square Health Center received a generous $5,500 grant from Partners HealthCare to support our food pantry operations and food assistance programs. As part of this effort, health center case managers helped to distribute supermarket gift cards to families in need around the holidays.

Pictured: Amaya Pierrette and her mother Leonna Porcher with their Supermarket Gift Card.
ANNUAL SERVICE AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The Codman Square Health Center Service Award, formerly the Valentina Service Award, honors health center staff members that exhibit the highest level of professionalism and customer service. Now in its third year, the Service Awards were presented on January 24, 2015 to Michele Whigham-Brown and Lystra Charles. Ms. Whigham-Brown received $2,500 for her to spend time with her family, and Ms. Charles received a week of PITA time for rest and relaxation.

Michele Whigham-Brown, a Patient Navigator and the Radiology Coordinator, has been with Codman for almost 13 years and throughout that time has taken on numerous important tasks and initiatives in Radiology. Specifically focusing on cancer care and following up with patients who have abnormal cancer screening results, Michele is respectful, caring and compassionate. She helps identify and address barriers to care for patients, and works closely with our nurses and providers to get patients the specialized care they need. One of Michele’s colleagues wrote, “Michele assists patients during one of the most frightening and anxiety producing times in their lives with care and compassion, achieving the desired results by engaging patients in their care, despite their own fears, with a style and delivery that should make all of Codman proud.” Michele clearly demonstrates teamwork, respect, and professionalism while maintaining a patient-focus, and we are proud to recognize her as the first place winner of the 2015 Codman Square Health Center Service Award.

Lystra Charles, Codman’s Patient Services Supervisor, has been at Codman for over 10 years, advancing positions during that time, as she continually demonstrates her hard work and innovation. Lystra is revered as smart, hard worker who leads with compassion and a kind demeanor. Responsible for managing the Call Center and helping to connect patients to the care they need, Lystra is always professional and thinking about how to best take care of our patients. Numerous stories of forlorn patients in need of help find their way to Lystra who immediately will do all she can to rectify the situation. Codman is proud to honor Lystra as the second place winner of the 2015 Codman Square Health Center Service Award.

FREE TAX CLINICS RETURN TO CODMAN SQUARE

Each year the tax season brings a critical opportunity to return money to the Codman Square neighborhood. Though recent reports from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy expose how severely imbalanced the tax breaks are for the lowest income families even compared to just middle class Americans, important tax breaks like the Earned-Income Tax Credit and free tax services can provide an important boost to the lowest earners. Codman Square Health Center partners each year with the Boston Tax Help Coalition (formerly EITC Coalition) to provide free tax preparation and filing for Boston residents within specific income levels. Last year a total of over 3 million dollars was returned to the community through almost 3 thousand tax returns. These free tax services help to lessen the financial burden on our community, and ultimately improve the health of Dorchester.

The free tax clinics this year will run on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4pm to 8pm and on Saturdays from 9am to 2pm at Codman Square Health Center’s 450 Washington Street location.
FRESH TRUCK HOLIDAY POP-UP MARKET

On Wednesday, December 17th, Codman Square Health Center partnered with the Fresh Truck and Boston Medical Center (BMC) HealthNet Plan to have a holiday pop-up market outside of the health center. Over the course of just 1 hour, more than 150 families shopped at the Fresh Truck pop-up market completely depleting them of their entire stock.

As part of the event, BMC HealthNet Plan handed out $10 coupons to the Fresh Truck at a booth inside the Codman Square Health Center. Families checked out Fresh Truck’s pop-up market, which included an array of fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains. All this great fresh produce was gone in an hour, making this the most successful Fresh Truck event to date.

Throughout the month of December, BMC HealthNet Plan and Fresh Truck visited local community centers in urban neighborhoods and rural towns where healthy and affordable foods are not as readily available.

NEW BOARD MEMBER BRINGS WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

In 2014 Codman Square Health Center was honored to welcome Dr. Anahid Kulwicki to its Board of Directors. Dr. Kulwicki is currently the Dean and Professor at the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at University of Massachusetts Boston. She brings an impressive range of skills and experience within the healthcare world, specifically focusing on the health of immigrant, refugee and minority populations in the areas of domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, infant mortality, teen health, maternal child health, smoking and cancer prevention. A hallmark of her work has been creative collaboration between public and private institutions across multiple disciplines.

As the Dean of Nursing at one of our nation’s largest nursing programs and the only nursing program located here in Dorchester, Dr. Kulwicki brings great insight and the potential for new opportunities. She expressed, “As a board member, I am hoping that our College of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Boston will be engaged in supporting the mission and vision of the health center by providing educational and clinical opportunities for its staff and clients and for our students by addressing health disparities in our immediate neighborhood.” She sees a close connection between the missions of UMASS Boston and Codman Square Health Center and knows they both play critical roles in addressing challenges and opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of Dorchester residents. Dr. Kulwicki is energized by the unique population Codman serves, and believes Dorchester would not be the same without Codman Square Health Center.

Dr. Kulwicki joins a diverse group of twelve Board of Directors at Codman Square Health Center including professionals with backgrounds in law, social work, finance, education, human resources, ministry and the environment.