

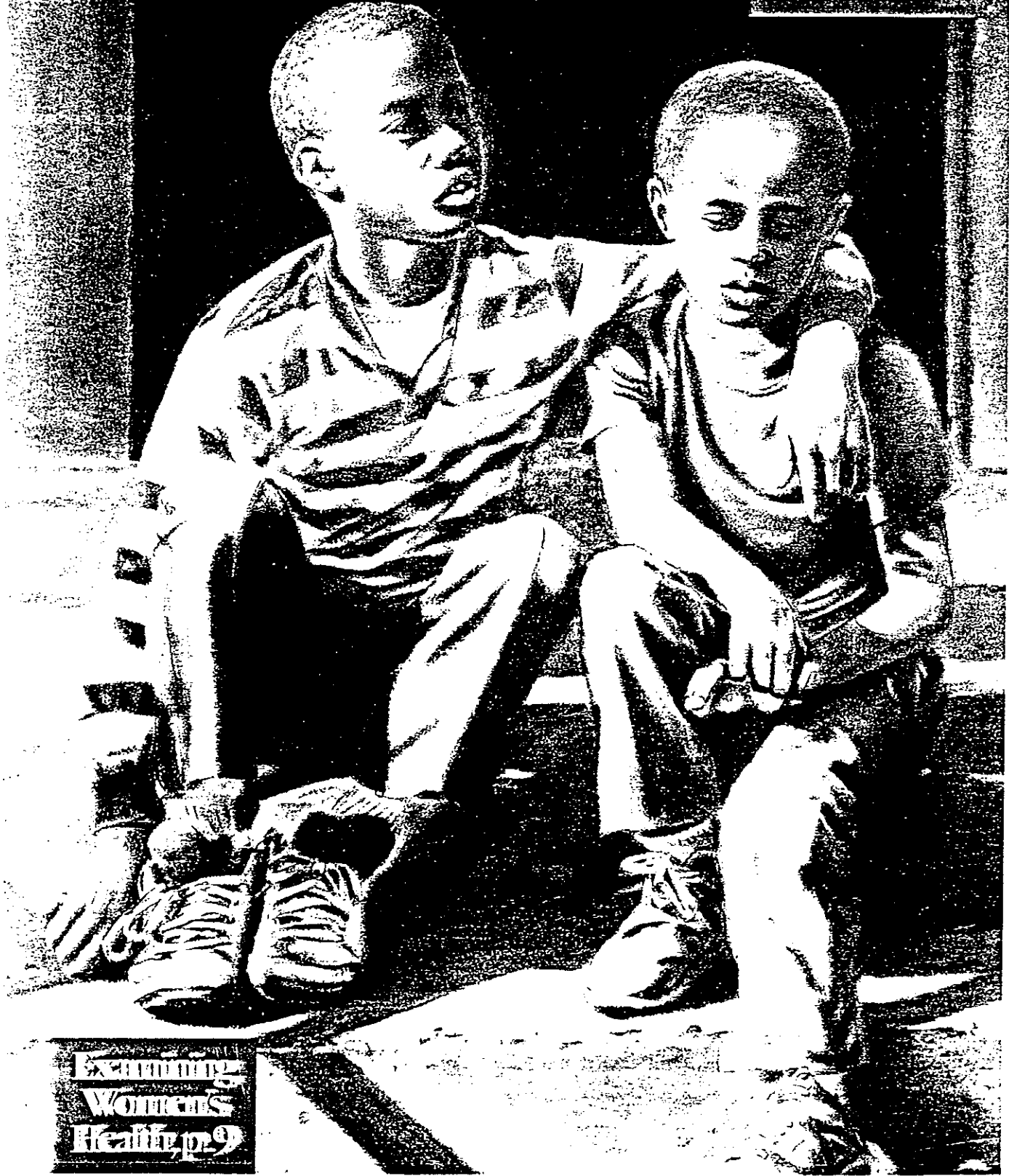
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# Today

A Community  
At A Crossroads



Examining  
Women's  
Health, p. 9

# A Community At A Crossroads

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Photography by Paul Calhoun

On the corner of 16th Street and Washington Ave., amidst a neighborhood of Hispanic restaurants and shops, sits 16th Street Community Health Center. The neighborhood is teeming with life. El Ray's, located directly across the street, attracts the local Hispanic residents and those who venture into the neighborhood for a taste of "south of the border" cuisine.

Inside the 16th Street Community Health Center, the bilingual staff of physicians, nurses, social workers, and others speak Spanish to a clientele who often do not speak English.

There is a healthy exchange between the Center and the neighborhood. The residents support the Center's effort to offer "front line," accessible health care: prenatal care, child immunizations, and lead and asbestos screening. In return, the Center creates jobs and opportunity for people who otherwise are often ignored by a society which tends to stereotype as unemployable and uneducated those who do not speak English.

Several miles away, in the heart of Milwaukee's north side, MLK Heritage Health Center and Isaac Ciggs Health Center provide access to primary health care for many of the city's underserved. Together the two clinics serve more than 19,000 patients and log over 57,000 visits per year. The clinics are staffed by physicians, dentists and nurses, and are managed by Milwaukee Health Services, Inc.

MLK Heritage Health Center, located on Martin Luther King Drive, recently opened its beautiful new facility near Clark Avenue and Martin Luther King Drive, an area which is pushing hard to be prosperous. The neighborhood has attracted several new businesses, including Walgreens, Bank

One, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. They anchor an area once left to decay. Along with these businesses, hope has moved in.

Isaac Ciggs Health Center, located on 5th Street, began in 1990 to address a growing problem—the lack of access to primary care for those whose insurance is Medicare, Medicaid, or non-existent. Businesses have left and crime has risen. Yet Isaac Ciggs has been successful at its mission of providing a vast array of services—from mental health to HIV early intervention and AIDS treatment to a clinic for the uninsured.

## Tracking Health Status

Several years ago, Milwaukee made national headlines as having one of the highest African-American teenage pregnancy rates of any major US city.

A few years later, cryptosporidium again put the city in the spotlight, this time for having unhealthy water.

The crime rate is up. In 1994, homicides of children through age 18 were seven times greater than in 1985!

Since the first AIDS/HIV documented case in Wisconsin during the early 1980s, the number of persons with HIV infections in Wisconsin has grown to nearly 10,000. AIDS cases have grown to 3,000.

Paul Nannis, Commissioner of the City of Milwaukee Health Department, is responsible for raising awareness and working with the community on creating

solutions to Milwaukee's healthcare dilemma.

"What we do best is collect epidemiological information," says Nannis, "and translate that data into good public policy."

"We track issues like infant mortality, lead poisoning, teen pregnancy, violence and environmental health and then create programs to assist in addressing the problems.

The Health Department supports the community's efforts to become and stay healthy."

Nannis adds, "Once we determine an



*The 16th Street Community Health Center serves as a major primary care clinic for the many residents of Milwaukee's Near South Side.*

area where violence exists, we can target our efforts (programming) there."

The Health Department also collects data on a range of community problems. Among its findings: Since 1985, infant mortality has dropped overall from 13% to 11%. Infant mortality to "nonwhite" females continues to be double that of "white" infant mortality rates. Birth rates have remained stable, yet of the total births in Milwaukee, the rate of births to teenagers has risen from 17% to 19%. Births to single women have risen even more sharply, from 42% to 58%.

In the city of Milwaukee, immunization rates for children under the age of two have risen 27% in just three years. Currently the rate is over 53%. While this is positive, Nannis cautions that we have much to do to reach the goal of 90% immunization for this group.

According to Nannis, the information is useful in developing policy and programs. The Health Department has city-wide lead poisoning testing, blood pressure screenings, flu shots, health education and nutrition counseling, to name a few. The Milwaukee Breast Cancer Awareness Project offers a mobile mammography van which screens non-insured or underinsured women for breast cancer and connects them with a healthcare provider who can offer treatment (Froedtert Hospital is a participant).

But there are barriers to creating a healthier Milwaukee.

"Behaviors, both institutional and personal, can be barriers to changing health status," says Nannis. "But the biggest barrier is the lack of primary care in the areas that need it most."

"While Milwaukee has some limited primary care services, there is a lack of infrastructure in the areas that need it most. We need to address this in a total system of care."

### The Front Line Of Community Health Care: The North Side

**P**roblems in accessing primary care are the main reasons behind the creation of Isaac Coggs Health Center and MLK Heritage Health Center. Sheik Bacchus, Executive Director of Milwaukee Health Services, is strongly committed to delivering these services to those who need it most.

"At the Isaac Coggs location, we discovered that there were tremendous access problems to the residents of the community," says Bacchus. "There was an inability to provide the central city with dentistry, primary care and other sub-specialties."

What resulted was the construction of MLK Heritage Health Center. Opened last

May, the Center includes a primary care clinic, dentistry, a lab, x-ray, and pharmacy – all with extended hours. There are many support and outreach efforts such as the WIC program or the HIV early intervention program. Health education and parenting classes are offered. Outreach workers make door-to-door calls to the elderly or new mothers.

"Here at MLK, we focus on the larger numbers of maternal and child health," says Bacchus.

"We talk a lot these days about outcomes. I think one that we have penetrated is reduction of infant mortality and low birth rates. We achieved this by working with the community-based and private sector entities which I believe has resulted in Sinai Samaritan (a metropolitan hospital) closing two floors of the neo-intensive care unit. The babies are better babies now."

Bacchus adds, "We always talk about the 'evil' things, but there are some good things that are coming out of this community."

Milwaukee Health Services also runs an adolescent school-based clinic at North Division High School. "The emphasis of that clinic is that we offer comprehensive primary care to the students," Bacchus states. "The clinic is staffed by a nurse practitioner and St. Mary's Family Practice Program physicians. They do whatever is needed – prenatal care, sports or pre-employment physicals, or treatment of sexually transmitted diseases."

Overall, the client base that the two Centers and the school-based clinic serve is 80% African-American, 11% white, 8% Hispanic, and 1% Asian other. Major health issues include asthma, lead toxicity, hypertension, congestive heart failure, diabetes, depression, and sexually transmitted diseases.

### The Near South Side

**O**n Milwaukee's near south side, the 16th Street Community Health Center serves a population with a profile very different than its north side neighbors – 72% Hispanic, 17% white, 7% Asian, and 4% African-American. The majority of the Health Center's clients are faced with linguistic barriers that can affect the delivery of healthcare.

John Bartkowski, the Center's Chief Executive Officer, is committed to the area both professionally and personally.

"Our mission is to provide primary health services, social services, health education and a broad range of things that are considered community health to the near south side of Milwaukee," says Bartkowski. "Our goal is not to just get people in the Health Center and back out. Our goal is truly community health – which is bigger than just providing medical services."

An example of this is the Office of Environmental Health, the only one of its kind in the country, which tracks and maps issues such as lead and asbestos.

"Lead is a big environmental hazard in our area," Bartkowski says. "We are doing a large study knocking on every door in our area doing blood tests on kids and actually doing intensive health education and follow-up."

At age 26, the 16th Street Community Health Center is a national model for community-based public-private partnership providing quality, cost-effective health care. The Health Center is also very active in economic development issues.

"If people don't have good housing or good nutrition or a clean environment," Bartkowski points out, "then we will just become a revolving door in which people come in sick and then they leave."

A Community Advisory Board assists the Center in implementing a number of projects. For instance, the Health Center recently conducted an extensive survey of

households looking specifically at environmental hazards. The Advisory Board supported the effort and will now help develop the best message as well as the best vehicle for that message to educate the population about risks.

"We did a study which asked people where they learn about ozone and 60% stated that it was from T.V.," he says. "If we are developing an educational message about asthma and how to reduce asthma then we need to look at a television approach rather than using direct mail."

The impact of the 16th Street Community Health Center in delivering outreach services and health care delivery is dramatic. Since 1969, the Health Center has seen over a half-million patients, the average age being mid-20's. That means primary health services are aimed at maternal and child, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases, and mental health.

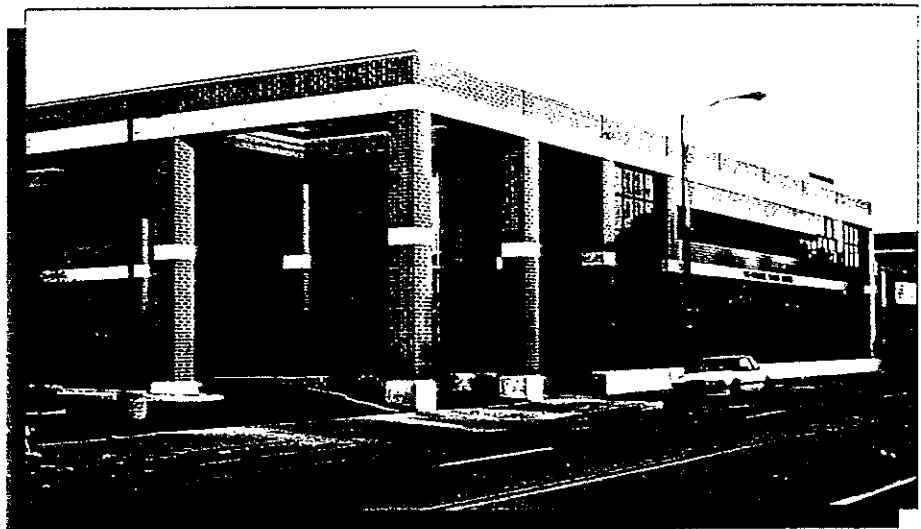
Every year, over 700 pregnancies are monitored.

"A lot of these people would not have access to healthcare and prenatal care without us," Bartkowski says. "They are uninsured or they may be undocumented. The impact that we have is we are here and people are using us."

### AIDS in Milwaukee

Perhaps one of the most terrifying health problems in Milwaukee is the spread of HIV, or AIDS. AIDS is the leading cause of death for men ages 18 to 45 years old in the United States. It is also the fourth leading cause of death of all persons under age 45.

Milwaukee is fortunate to be one of only three cities in the United States which has a National Institute of Health AIDS Prevention Research Center. Thanks to Jeff Kelly, PhD, Director of the Center for AIDS Intervention Research (CAIR) at the Medical College of Wisconsin, this city has been awarded major funding to study HIV pre-



MLK Heritage Health Center opened last spring to serve the residents of the North Side.

vention and the mental health aspects of AIDS.

"Milwaukee is a second-tier city," says Kelly. "HIV came here much later than a city like New York or San Francisco.

"The best guess right now of persons infected with HIV in Wisconsin is just under 10,000. This does not mean that Wisconsin is protected from HIV. What it means is that we have an opportunity to do things that frankly could not be done in big cities. We have an opportunity to prevent infections."

Kelly continues, "We know it's here now. By taking steps to prevent HIV infection we can in fact reduce the mortality of individuals. I think there is a window of opportunity where we can make behavior changes before it hits hard." CAIR is a program developed to take advantage of that window.

Kelly, who is also a Medical College Psychologist, began the program five years ago. CAIR, which employs 45 persons ranging from social workers to physicians, has a primary mission to stop AIDS with community-level interventions. As a research program, CAIR identifies and implements effective tools to stop the spread of HIV.

"HIV is a moving target because it has so many 'sub-epidemics,'" Kelly says. "We know that there is another epidemic that is affecting inner city residents - young people, poor people and minorities."

CAIR efforts are primarily aimed at these at-risk populations. Working with community-based clinics such as Isaac Coggs Health Center or the 16th Street Health Center, CAIR is able to develop education and intervention programs. Through the City of Milwaukee Health Department, CAIR is active with the Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinics. Along with the Milwaukee County Mental Health Complex satellite clinics, the CAIR team offers education aimed at chronic mentally ill persons who are sexually active and at elevated HIV risk. Yet their grassroots efforts extend much further, from working with housing developments to local taverns.

How exactly does CAIR work in preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS? "It takes a package of ingredients to make changes," Kelly contends. "Education is only part of it. Pride, or self-esteem, is a large factor. Convincing people that they want to live a long and healthy life. If you think of people we are targeting, they have been told such things as you're poor, you don't have a job, you don't deserve good relationships. We think that you have to wrap an intervention around the theme that you are a good person and we don't want this killing you early or killing your kids.

"Building skills such as saving, go to

a partner or negotiating what's best for you is essential. There is a responsibility that we have to protect ourselves, but there is also a responsibility to protect others."

### The Biggest Risk: Funding

**A** responsibility to a healthier Milwaukee is at the heart of the growth and commitment of the community-based clinics and programs.

Yet, as the debates over Medicare and Medicaid funding in Congress and at the State level rage on, and as research grants to medical schools continue to be cut, Milwaukee is at risk of losing all that it has gained.

"The fact is that most people are outside the traditional health care delivery system," says Bartkowski. "Politicians are tripping over themselves to see who can make more cuts. Medicaid is going to be completely revamped and reduced in terms of the services.

"We don't know how the federal grant to us will change what we do. There are a lot of issues that haven't been clearly thought out."

One of those issues that both Bartkowski and Bacchus point to is the change in Aid For Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). The proposed Wisconsin Works program will require women to become fully employed and produce a co-pay for both medical and child care.

"All these mothers are going to be placed in jobs which don't exist or are at minimum wage - with possibly several kids at home," Bartkowski states. "If you take a minimum wage job and pay \$5.00 an hour for child care and \$5.50 for health care, you're left with maybe \$2.00 an hour to live.

"So then the question is: Are we going to end up with all of our patients which we currently see with no other revenue source - no federal grant and no reimbursement?"

Bacchus agrees. "The major dilemma we are facing today is looking at the

General Assistance, Medicaid and Medicare situation. We are talking about moving Medicaid people off the program where they will become part of the larger number of people who are uninsured and underinsured.

As we look at working poor and displaced workers from our historical trend, we have seen the number one diagnosis is depression. As a society we better be prepared to deal with that."

Bacchus points out that Isaac Coggs and MLK Heritage Center are both affected deeply by the pending cuts in Medicare because of the older population they serve.

"I feel that with the escalating costs associated with the monthly premiums and with the co-payment and deductibles having spiraling costs," Bacchus warns. "Lots of these Medicare beneficiaries will be unable to afford premiums. Thus they would be ineligible to obtain services on an outpatient basis if they don't pay their premium. This will result in excessive use of emergency rooms and hospitals."

For programs like CAIR, government cuts also affect the ability of NIH and other sources to fund projects. Although not in jeopardy at this time, Kelly realizes that they are vulnerable like all major research areas (like heart disease and cancer) because funding will be all the more scarce in the future.

"The funding for AIDS research is linked with funding for all health research," says Kelly. "There will have to be some kind of reflection by people in this country whether and to what extent research is important and worth supporting."

Most community health leaders agree that it is citizens who need to reflect on Milwaukee's health status and decide its fate.

"Who will be there with scarce resources and cutting dollars and inability to have subsidized healthcare," Bacchus says. "Whose responsibility will that be?"

## Community Health Resources

There are many clinics and programs serving the health needs of Milwaukee's underprivileged. Here are just a few:

**16th Street Community Health Center**  
Primary care clinic

**Isaac Coggs Health Center**  
Primary care clinic and clinic for the uninsured

**MLK Heritage Health Center**  
Primary care clinic

**Metcalf Park Health Center**  
Operated by the Marquette University College of Nursing. Nurse-run program offering screenings, immunizations, etc.

**Milwaukee Indian Health Board Community Health Center**

**Lisbon Avenue Center**  
Primary care clinics

**Health Care for the Homeless of Milwaukee**  
Delivering health care to Milwaukee's homeless community

**Center for AIDS Intervention Research (CAIR) of the Medical College of Wisconsin**

**Black Health Coalition**  
Advocates for health care

**Latino Health Organization**  
Advocates for health care

**Cream City Physicians Group**  
Physicians practicing in Metro Milwaukee area advocating health care issues

## Government Agencies

**Milwaukee County Department of Aging**  
Advocates for older adult services

**Milwaukee County WIC Project**  
Supplemental food, nutrition services and some health services for pregnant and postpartum women and children to age 5

**City of Milwaukee Health Department**  
Runs clinics (screenings, immunizations, etc.) and other outreach programs