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## Drop in clinic numbers good, but its job remains important

The Herald-Times Jun 10, 2014

The Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) clinic has been a pioneer in providing health care for the uninsured. Since it opened in 2007, thousands of people from Monroe and Owen counties who could not otherwise afford medical care have been treated for no or little cost.

Compassionate, forward-thinking community members, led by Dr. Raj Haddawi, didn't wait for the state or federal governments to provide this help. They took action and it's been a major benefit to members of our community. VIM has saved lives and improved the quality of life for those it has served.

A weekend story by reporter Dann Denny explained that VIM has seen about a 30 percent drop in its number of patient visits and dispensed prescriptions compared to a year ago. Many organizations would see that as a negative, but not VIM. That's because the Affordable Care Act has allowed many of its former patients and potential patients to secure insurance and access to private health care options.

Along with treating uninsured patients, volunteers at the clinic have helped patients navigate the Affordable Care Act process and secure insurance.

Nancy Richman, executive director of VIM, sees that as a natural extension of her organization's commitment to patients.

"We are working entirely on behalf of the ACA, because we think it's a good thing for people living in poverty to have access to health insurance. That's why we made a commitment many months ago to help our patients understand the ACA as well as their options, and to help them enroll," she said.

There still will be individuals who do not qualify for insurance through the ACA or the Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0, which will leave a vital place in the community for Volunteers in Medicine. It will continue to be needed to take care of members of the community living in poverty who, for whatever reason, still will not have health insurance.

In doing so, it will continue to be perhaps the most important addition to the community in the past decade.

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