

Pop-Up Health Fair Brings Direct Services to Underserved Urban Community

BACKGROUND

Low socioeconomic status (SES) communities in Nevada face multiple, interconnected barriers to accessing healthcare. These challenges are shaped by geographic, financial, social, and systemic factors, and disproportionately affect rural, frontier, and urban areas with concentrated poverty. The results of low healthcare access can include poorer health status and increased disease burden, delayed care and reduced use of preventive and early detection services, increased risk of medical debt and loss of employment, and increased use of emergency departments.

Community-based care—bringing healthcare and resources closer to patients through pop-up health fairs, community clinics, or mobile clinics—is a proven way to reduce inequities created by low healthcare access. By focusing activities on a specific community, services and resources can be tailored based on community characteristics, such as language, and needs, such as vision or dental care.

In addition to providing clinical services,

such interventions can include educational opportunities. Data from Prevent Cancer Foundation's 2025 Early Detection Survey found only 51% of U.S. adults ages 21 and older say they have had a routine medical appointment or routine cancer screening in the past year. When people learn about the benefits of early detection, however, 73% are more likely to schedule their routine cancer screenings.



Above: Students from the UNR Student Outreach Clinic.
Below: Clinic staff from Community Health Alliance.

CHALLENGE

Residents of the Sun Valley community in north Reno are considered to have a medium to high level of social vulnerability with higher rates of poverty, housing insecurity, and uninsurance than other areas in northern Nevada. This area also has a high percentage of Hispanic/Latino residents, higher rates of smoking and inactivity, lower rates of breast and colorectal cancer screening, and residents who are more likely to have transportation barriers and threats to utility services and less likely to have their annual health checkups. Sun Valley has about 23,000 residents and just one community health center operated by Community Health Alliance.



OPPORTUNITY

Father Edgar leads the congregation of St. Peter Canisius Catholic Church and saw an advertisement for Nevada Cancer Coalition's ThriveNV navigation-to-screening service. Knowing that many of his parishioners likely needed help to access healthcare, he reached out to NCC to bring the services direct to his church. This presented an opportunity to leverage the endorsement of this community influencer to advance health equity by implementing a number of evidence-based interventions including:

- Reducing structural barriers
- Reducing out-of-pocket costs
- Using patient navigation
- Providing health education

ACTIVITY

Through months of work, NCC, Father Edgar and several community partners developed a plan to host a pop-up community health fair. The event was planned for a Sunday when parishioners would already be attending church and would be more likely to participate in the event. Pop-up health fairs have been proven to increase community connection, improve healthcare access, build trust between healthcare providers and the community, and promote healthy behaviors.

A dozen organizations participated in the event, which also included live music and food trucks. Participant organizations and services provided were:

- Access to Healthcare Network, providing education about Women's Health Connection and other health access programs
- Catholic Charities providing vaccines
- Community Health Alliance, distributing FIT kits for colorectal cancer screening and providing blood pressure checks and vaccines
- Lions Clubs of Nevada's Vision Committee, providing vision screenings
- Nevada Cancer Coalition, providing program education and cancer resources
- Northern Nevada Dental Health Program, providing children's dental screenings
- NVEnergy, enrolling residents in the Energy Assistance Program
- Renown Health, scheduling mammograms
- Sam's Club, offering discounted membership
- University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine Student Outreach Clinic, providing physicals & A1C screenings
- Washoe County School District Family Resource Center, providing financial resources and energy assistance



Above: Lions Clubs of Nevada vision checks
Below: Renown Health scheduling mammograms.



OUTCOMES

The 5-hour event drew an estimated 1,000 community members who learned about cancer prevention and early detection, got health screenings, and scheduled appointments for other screenings. Parash Bhakta, CEO of UNR's Student Outreach Clinic said events such as this "play a vital role in helping us deliver care to underserved communities while providing valuable learning opportunities for students." Community Health Alliance registered 15 new patients, and UNR's students provided 45 physicals and did 12 A1C screenings. Forty vision screenings were completed and 20 applications were submitted for eye exams and glasses. Dental screenings were provided to 15 children and 40 vaccines were administered.

31

mammograms
scheduled

5

Pap/HPV tests
scheduled

18

colorectal tests given:
16 FIT kits & 2 Cologuard

8

HPV vaccines given

"This was such a great event!"

- Liz Partida, Community Health Alliance

"Support through events like this plays a vital role in helping us deliver care to underserved communities while providing valuable learning opportunities for students."

- Linda Brown, Lions Clubs Vision Committee

Fr. Edgar played a vital role in making this event happen for his congregation. Because of the efforts of him and his church staff, they made it a fun and welcoming event for everyone who attended church that day.

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