Innovation Report



Washington Association for Community Health
Community Health Centers Advancing Quality Care for All

neighborcare health

Building a Strong Foundation

Neighborcare Health demonstrates how community health centers can develop sustainable support for essential services.

Lessons from Neighborcare Health Foundation

For community health centers (CHCs) considering standing up a foundation, the Neighborcare Health Foundation offers an inspiring and practical roadmap. With its roots in community advocacy and a successful relationship-driven fundraising model, Neighborcare Health demonstrates how CHCs can develop sustainable support for essential services.

The mission of the Neighborcare Health Foundation is to build collaborative relationships and seek additional resources to advance Neighborcare Health's ultimate goal of achieving 100% access to health care with zero disparities.

A Legacy of Community Advocacy

Neighborcare Health was established in the late 1960s during the civil rights movement, driven by local advocacy to preserve access to affordable care. That same spirit continues to drive the organization today. Their first clinics were volunteer-based and existed on shoestring budgets. Operating in converted apartment units, fire stations and even converted taverns, staff in the early days were incredibly innovative in advocating for new ways to deliver health care. Their 45th Street Clinic, for example, was slated to become a private business, but community members successfully fought to build a nonprofit clinic instead.

Neighborcare Health now serves more than 60,000 patients annually, including many young people across 17 school-based health centers, making it the largest provider of school-based care in Seattle, WA. 85% of Neighborcare Health patients live at or below the federal poverty level, half are enrolled in Medicaid, and 21% are uninsured. Patients travel from across the region to receive comprehensive care from their trusted health center.



Neighborcare Health at a Glance

- **Over 30 sites across King County (WA)**
- **69,715 patients served**
- **3,959 school-based patients**
- **13,592 uninsured patients**
- **224,013 visits annually**
- **Over 580 employees**

Establishing the Foundation

Although Neighborcare Health has a long history, the Foundation itself became its own entity in 2020. The development team currently consists of a Foundation Executive Director, Development Coordinator, Grants Manager, and Marketing Communications Manager, with more plans to grow the team. In 2024, the Foundation formed its first strategic plan, aligned with Neighborcare Health's overall strategic plan, fostering organizational alignment and strong support.

The Foundation's approach is centered on the knowledge that fundraising is not about asking for money, it's about building relationships and connecting to people's passions. Some donors have given for decades, and many began with modest contributions that grew over time.

Neighborcare Health Foundation's Commitments:

- **We keep people and relationships in focus.**
- **Centering the people we serve in our everyday work.**
- **Building collaborative relationships with our community partners.**
- **Educating our donors and partners.**
- **Honoring our patients with respectful language and communications.**

Strategic Growth and Operational Excellence

The Foundation is now focusing on deepening long-term relationships and expanding its donor base through community-driven events and thoughtful engagement. Signature campaigns include:

- Spring Give (March–May): A campaign supporting key programs.
- GiveBIG (April–May): Focused on new donor acquisition.
- National Health Center Week (August): National Association of Community Health Center's celebration of community health centers
- 43rd Annual Feast of the Market: Progressive dinner experience fundraiser
- Year-End Campaign: Donation drive for highly requested items

These events serve the purposes of both fundraising and community building. The Foundation invite people into the organization's mission in tangible ways while celebrating relationships in the local community.

Keeping expenses low is one successful part of the Foundation's strategy. Through partnerships and smart planning, the team has secured beautiful event venues at little or no cost. The Foundation team has found success in focusing on smaller, more intimate events that prioritize connection with donors, rather than hosting one big annual gala.

The Foundation's 2025 goal included capital, individual, major donor, and sponsorship gifts. To reach this, the Foundation focused on tailoring outreach by donor segment, strengthening relationships with long-time and new donors, expanding the Foundation Board from 6 to 11 members and driving their team's decision-making by leveraging available data.



Neighborcare Health Foundation recently achieved a significant milestone by reaching 95% of its goal for a dental capital campaign. This initiative transformed their Wallingford clinic from four outdated operatories to six modern ones, expanding dental care to 2,300 additional individuals who lack access.

Takeaways for Health Centers

Neighborcare Health Foundation's journey offers valuable lessons for fellow health centers.

- Build a foundation rooted in your history and community values.
- Prioritize relationships and purpose over fundraising.
- Anchor campaigns around impact and community connection.
- Keep costs low and aim for smaller, creative events.
- Focus on stewardship to turn new donors into lifelong supporters.

Neighborcare Health Foundation proves that investing in building a foundation can make a big impact when powered by strong strategy, relationships, and community. For health centers ready to take the next step in sustainability, their model offers both inspiration and a clear path forward.



Washington Association for Community Health

The Association's innovation reports aim to support community health centers in leading innovation by identifying successful promising practices and communicating them to the statewide network.

Does your CHC have an innovation to share? Let us know!

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