“The capacity to care gives life its deepest meaning.”
– Pablo Casals
**MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND BOARD CHAIR**

**CARING...** is one of the four core values of Operation Access (OA). Caring is demonstrated in many ways at OA, especially by the 1,030 medical professionals who volunteer their time and services to provide donated specialty care to low-income, uninsured patients. Thank you to all our dedicated medical volunteers for your caring, as 2010 was a very challenging and rewarding year for Operation Access. The demand for our services continued to increase. We received over 2,000 referrals from 89 community clinics across 6 Bay Area counties. 1,392 patients received specialty care procedures, diagnostic screenings and outpatient surgeries that improved their health, ability to work and quality of life.

Two distinguished healthcare leaders recently joined the OA Board: Delvecchio Finley, Vice President of Operations at California Pacific Medical Center, and Dr. Alden Harken, Chair of the Department of Surgery at Alameda County Medical Center. We also express our sincere appreciation to Dr. Sang-ick Chang, Chief Medical Officer of the Alameda County Medical Center, and Dr. Ana Valdes, Medical Director of the St. Anthony Free Medical Clinic, who concluded their Board service at the end of the year.

Two new hospitals, Washington Hospital Healthcare System and Sutter Medical Center, Santa Rosa, joined the OA network, bringing the total number of participating hospitals and medical centers to 33. We thank each and every health facility for the competent and caring service they provide.

Fundraising efforts exceeded our goal of $1,250,000. Over 20 foundations, corporations and donor-advised funds provided OA with funds to strengthen and expand our services to those in need, especially our three largest funders, John Muir/Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund, Kaiser Permanente, and Sutter Health. We are also grateful for the many individual donors who contributed to OA in 2010.

There’s something wonderfully exciting and rewarding in being part of an organization that makes a difference. Operation Access is making a difference in the lives of our patients, our volunteers, and our community. We could not do so without your support, encouragement and caring. Thank you!

With our deepest respect,

Benjamin Aune  Paul Hofmann, Dr. P.H.
President & CEO  Board Chairman

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**Did you know?**

For every $1.00 invested in OA, we are able to arrange for $10.40 in donated medical care for low-income uninsured patients.

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Sometimes, “Not Knowing” Can Make You Sick...

Right around the time that Ana Mirafuentes’ husband lost his job, she began to experience abdominal pain, back pain, and cramps. She couldn’t lift things and had difficulty walking, which resulted in being unable to work as a caretaker.

Ana was concerned that something was really wrong; she thought she might even have cancer. She sought help at an urgent care clinic, a local emergency department, and from a private practice physician. Being uninsured, Ana had to pay the cost of every visit out of pocket, which began to take a toll on her family as well.

“When I had the appointment and was told that the procedure would be free if I qualified for OA, I couldn’t believe it!! Who would do that? Especially with the economy the way it is! I was so happy and thankful to finally have found people that are so caring and have the passion to help people in need!”

In the end all went well with the procedure and, happily, nothing abnormal was found. It seems that the stress of Ana’s economic situation combined with the stress of not knowing what was happening with her body were the culprits. Ana is now healthy and happy and asked us to share her message to Dr. Varner:

“Your kindness makes this world a better place to live. Dr. Varner, you’ve given me peace of mind. My symptoms are pretty much gone and I feel much better. The fact that I had no health insurance and was experiencing so many bad symptoms, made me worry so much and feel so much worse than I should have. Thank you for you help!”

Fortunately, Ana learned about the Marin Community Clinic (MCC) and was seen in September. The primary care physician recommended a colonoscopy and arranged a consultation with Dr. Albert Varner, a gastroenterologist who volunteers with both the MCC and Operation Access.

“The bills started coming: my husband had lost his job and my hours were reduced at my own job. We couldn’t afford to pay the bills and started getting desperate; we were even avoiding answering the phone because we were afraid it would be the collection companies calling. The fact that I needed medical care and was uninsured really affected me emotionally. I was constantly on edge. I was very worried thinking I had cancer and didn’t have the means to take care of it.”

The average yearly income for OA patients was $17,760 for a family of four. The federal poverty level for a family of four is $22,350.

Did you know?

January 19, 2011
To: The Board of Directors and Advisory Council
Operation Access

Thank you very much for making this program possible. As a person who can’t afford to provide the people who care for me, I am one of the lucky people who have benefited from the free medical services of Dr. Albert Varner and your help. You’re doing good work, thank you for your efforts.

Very truly yours,
Ana Mirafuentes

Ana Mirafuentes, Operation Access patient
FROM “ZERO TO SIXTY”...

In late November, Kaiser Permanente Antioch (KPA) celebrated its first anniversary with Operation Access by mounting one of our most successful Super Surgery Sessions to date when 95 volunteers treated 30 patients. The Thanksgiving Super Surgery Day capped a year of explosive growth. From the first 7 patients seen in November 2009, through the close of 2010, a total of 85 OA patients received surgeries and specialty services at KPA.

This accomplishment is grounded in the commitment and passion of the professional team at KPA who have embraced OA's mission and continue to pursue it vigorously. Each volunteer brings his or her skills and enthusiasm to the effort. They are the ambassadors and community organizers who pave the way for patients served at KPA through Operation Access.

Chris Lomboy, RN, organizes the Operating Room staff and helps to coordinate housekeeping and sterile processing. He is a charismatic leader and is committed to local volunteerism:

“I have volunteered in foreign countries to assist with surgical procedures, but that has fallen off because many trips have been cancelled due to ‘unsafe’ environments. With the tough economy we are facing in the US and folks unable to find work, [I love] volunteering to help those who are in our ‘backyard’ and who need surgical intervention. It is such a GREAT feeling to be able to help these people.”

Denise Fleury, RN, organizes the PACU/ASU volunteers for each surgery session. She actively recruits nurses from a variety of departments to participate and she organizes and maintains all critical staffing information. Her leadership has been instrumental in maintaining the enthusiasm of nurse volunteers within her department and throughout the hospital.

Mary Clemency, MD, assures that anesthesia is covered for all surgery sessions. She personally reviews the case notes for every scheduled patient prior to each session to make sure that all is in order. Dr. Clemency’s enthusiasm for OA has triggered broad volunteer participation among her colleagues.

“OA’s work is remarkable and not a commonplace occurrence. It is the only opportunity in this region open to anesthesiologists who like to volunteer and who cannot usually take the time to travel abroad.”

William Ku, MD, is a true Surgeon Champion and was a key proponent for initiating the OA program in Antioch. He is OA’s ambassador to his colleagues as both a medical staff leader and role model. Dr. Ku has never refused to see an OA patient; he has participated in six surgery sessions, and has treated 20 patients since the program’s inception at KPA.

For every surgery session, “it takes a village” to provide quality, professional care for each patient. And as Chris Lomboy says, “Every surgery session has its own reward... seeing the staff, surgeons and anesthesiologists come together on their day off is so satisfying. We do this every day, but the OA days [feel] so different. It is more lively, less stress, [and] a time to do what we do best... surgeries.”

For a complete list of volunteers and participating hospitals, medical centers and medical groups, please visit www.operationaccess.org.

15 YEARS STRONG...

John Long, MD, a vascular surgeon who practices in San Francisco, is one of OA’s most senior and most active volunteers. Our patients have had the good fortune of receiving Dr. Long’s compassionate care since 1996 when he learned about OA from Drs. Richard Gibbs and Patricia Hellmann-Gibbs of the San Francisco Free Clinic. Dr. Long was in search of volunteer opportunities, and travel abroad was not an option. So began a fifteen year association during which Dr. Long has cared for 80 Operation Access patients.

Dr. Long most frequently performs varicose vein repairs for OA. He finds satisfaction in enabling his patients, many of whom are in the service industry, to remain standing longer with less pain. Over the years Dr. Long has also noticed that a secondary benefit is improvement of his patients’ self esteem. In addition to looking and feeling better, Dr. Long knows that his OA patients value the care they receive.

“(There was) one patient who worked part time at a coffee shop, and her condition made it difficult to stand for extended periods of time. One day (after her procedure) she brought coffee to share with our office. I was touched because the patient clearly understood and appreciated her treatment. It is refreshing to work with patients who are grateful instead of many patients who feel entitled. ”

When asked about his longevity as a volunteer and dedication to OA, he said, “OA makes it easy. It’s seamless and it fits right into my schedule. The OA staff and my office team work together so that patients come prepared for their treatment. And generally, the patients need what they are referred for. I am most impressed with Operation Access because the patients fully understand that we are donating our time and expertise to help them. They are truly grateful.”

Dr. Long credits his office team, the nurses, and the
Operation Access Changes Lives...

In November, OA and the Specialty Access Coalitions of Marin and Sonoma Counties came together to host a Celebration of Volunteerism at which patient Luigi Dagnino shared the following remarks about his Operation Access experience:

My name is Luigi Dagnino. I immigrated to this country ten years ago, and I have been working as a janitor to support my wife and 2 daughters, Vianca, 9 years old and Vannia, 3 years old.

A couple years ago, I decided to pursue my dream of being a winemaker, and, while continuing to work, I enrolled at Napa Valley College. I had been experiencing dizzy spells, snoring problems, and difficulty breathing at night, but then, after beginning my program, I realized that I had another major medical issue. I could not properly smell the wine. And... it is extremely important for a winemaker to smell the wine.

When I went to the clinic, I found out that, due to an accident years ago, I would need a surgery to repair my nose and sense of smell. But, I didn’t have any medical insurance or the money to afford this expensive procedure. I thought I would have to give up my dream of becoming a winemaker, and continue to work as a janitor for the rest of my life.

Then, the clinic staff performed for me a miracle and referred me to Operation Access. OA called me to set up an appointment with Dr. Meltzer at Kaiser Santa Rosa. They offered to help me and didn’t even know me. No one has ever cared so much or offered to help me without knowing a thing about me, other than that I needed help. I couldn’t believe my good fortune.

On the day of my surgery, everyone who showed up to help me- nurses, technicians, doctors, interpreters- were volunteering their time. It was really special. I still can’t believe that all those people came to help me without charging me a dime. It all went so smoothly and I was very well cared for.

Operation Access not only helped me with the surgery, but also gave me the opportunity to pursue my passion, making wine. I am eternally grateful to everyone, and I hope that the next time we get together to celebrate your volunteerism, we will all be able to make a toast with my own production of Pinot Noir Santini-Dagnino. Salud!

Luigi Dagnino is just one of the 1,392 patients whose lives were touched by the hard work, good will, and financial support from our partner clinics, volunteers, medical centers, and donors. Thank you!

OA processed 2,100 referrals from 89 community clinics – up 31% from 2009.

Did you know?

Did you know?

anesthesiologists at the California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) for making it so easy for him to “just do the procedures” on behalf of OA. CPMC is a long-time OA partner that donates operating rooms, staff and supplies free of charge to all OA patients.

446,000 people ages 19-64, living in OA’s service area were uninsured for all or part of 2009 – up 38% from 2007 (UCLA California Health Interview Survey).
93% of patients reported an improved quality of life after their procedures.
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