

SecondFirst Church

Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church PC(USA)
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(815)963-8431
www.secondfirst.org
www.facebook.com/secondfirstchurch/

Non Profit
Organization US
Postage PAID
Permit No. 3734
Rockford, Illinois

DECEMBER 2019

THE TOWER

SECOND CONGREGATIONAL UCC/FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

Energizing downtown Rockford and beyond with God's grace



A little bit from Becky E...

Advent. It is a season of waiting in darkness. It is the time of year when we are caught between the joyful expectations and the sometimes-harsh reality of the present while we wait for a promise to be fulfilled. In this present we are bombarded with tree lights, brightly colored packages and big bows. We are at odds with Advent as there seems to be no room for darkness,

preparation and prayer because Holiday songs and neighborhood lights are everywhere. In Advent we live amid the tension of what is and what will be.

Yet even in this time of waiting we are reminded of God's everlasting promise in the birth of Christ and the promise of Christ's return.

So, come and journey with us this Advent, where we can look forward to the Hope, Peace, Love and Joy of Christ. Journey together as we celebrate the birth of our Lord, and the expectations of Christ's return.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

What excitement it is to write the personalized arrangements for our Christmas Eve service! Our congregation can look forward to an exciting service. I pray my musical choices and arrangements will rise to the occasion that the choir, our decorations, the sermons and readings, and our congregants will expect.

We will have RSO harpist Nanette Felix, Baltimore Symphony clarinetist Melissa Lander, and a wonderful string quartet with us (led, as in the past five years, by the ever-talented Matthew Cataldi), in addition to the inimitable and amazing Valerie Blair and our Sanctuary Choir.

Among the music you will hear will be John Rutter's "What Sweeter Music", a wild version of Gaudete (complete with a hidden twelve-tone row to prick up our ears) to balance out the Rutter, a lush setting of the famous poem "All this Night My Heart Rejoices", and other beautiful works. To me, the point is never the music, but rather the extent to which our music can help to support ministry--the result should assist us in feeling the impact of the readings of the service: the Word of God.

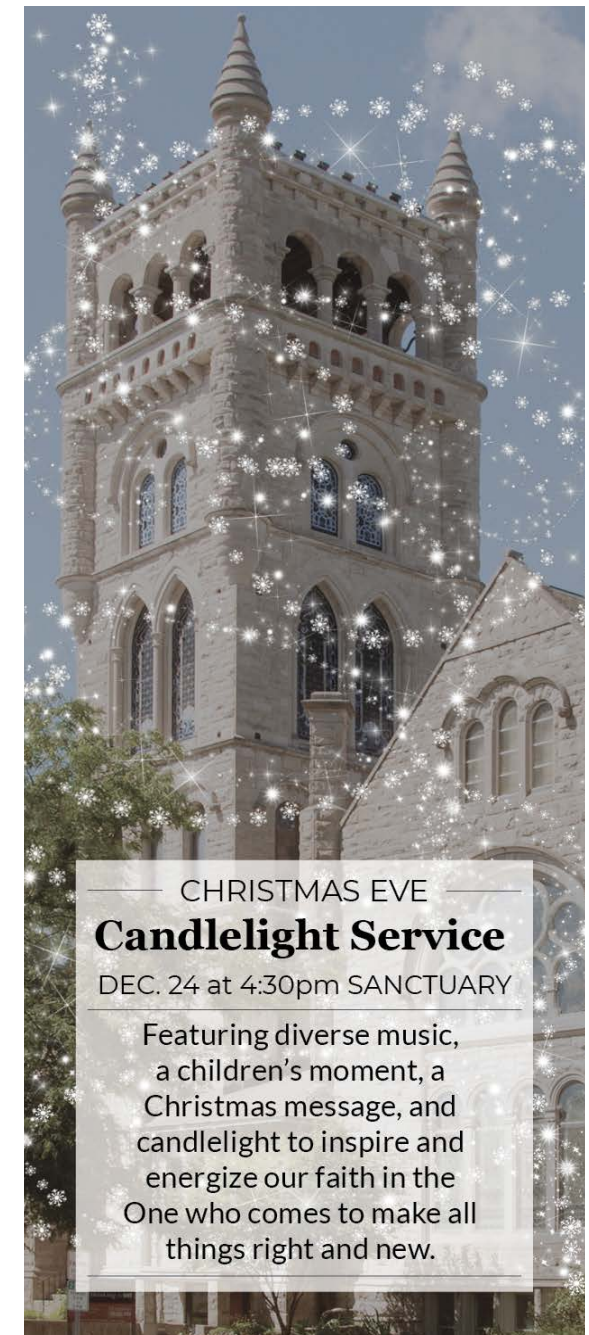
Please invite your friends, your neighbors, people you may not associate with normally, and even yourself to this special Christmas Eve Service. Candlelight, carols, prayer, and Christ.

Yours,
Paul Laprade, *Music Minister*

SAVE THE DATES

January 3: Snow Camp

January 6: Overnight Café



CHRISTMAS EVE Candlelight Service

DEC. 24 at 4:30pm SANCTUARY

Featuring diverse music,
a children's moment, a
Christmas message, and
candlelight to inspire and
energize our faith in the
One who comes to make all
things right and new.

"A VERY CARLY CHRISTMAS" - A HANDBELL CONCERT BENEFITING MISS CARLY'S

By Julie Cook Ramirez, Director of Handbell Ministries

I know what you're thinking. "I can't possibly squeeze anything else into this busy holiday season." Fair enough. We've all been there. However, you'll be kicking yourself if you miss "A Very Carly Christmas," our concert benefiting Miss Carly's on **Saturday, December 14 at 3:00 pm**. Our merry ringers have been working diligently for months on an array of tunes, guaranteed to fill you with the spirit of Christmas. The Peanuts will be here in all their adorableness. The Carillons and Bellcantos will share secular and sacred songs. And the Martin Ringers will close the show with several spectacular pieces, including a special performance destined to stay with you throughout the Christmas season - and perhaps beyond! Special guests include Vanessa Nieva, Valerie Blair, Aubrey Barnett, and a host of others.

Miss Carly herself will be here to tell us how she and her fellow volunteers are blessing Rockford's under-served population with food, clothing, rides, help getting into substance abuse treatment, and most importantly, the knowledge that somebody cares. This is a fabulous opportunity to learn more about the mission of Miss Carly's, honor this phenomenal woman, and raise funds to help her keep doing God's work in our community - all while enjoying some festive music.

Please do yourself a favor and set aside the time to join us for this wonderful afternoon of music and mission. Admission is free, with an offering taken to benefit Miss Carly's. Questions? Contact Julie Cook Ramirez at julie.cookramirez@secondfirst.org or 815-543-9739. For more information, call 815-963-8431.

Original artwork by Rockford artist Rebecca Taylor.



A Very Carly Christmas

A HANDBELL CONCERT BENEFITING MISS CARLY'S

**Saturday, December 14
3:00 p.m.**

www.secondfirst.org

COMMUNITY MURAL PROJECT

Our community has come together to continue the process of making our mural a reality. The large mural panels were primed and sanded, and the painting is underway! Big thanks to everyone in the community who has come out to take part in this project. We are excited to watch this project continue to come to life! More pictures at [facebook.com/secondfirstchurch](https://www.facebook.com/secondfirstchurch)



Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped with this project!

OUR MINISTRY TEAMS NEED YOU!

Have you ever wondered if helping at church can make a difference? I am certain everyone would say yes of course. But have you ever thought about what a difference it makes? When we hosted the Blackhawk Presbytery Meeting, we needed greeters, guides, people to help with registration, and others to help with parking. Before the meeting people had to help bring chairs and tables to five rooms, and to the narthex. Classroom direction signs were added to the hallways. We hosted and received over 100 people. All the tables in the dining room were made ready for our guests. A full breakfast was served along with a delicious lunch. Dishes, pots, and pans had to be cleaned. This meeting could not have taken place without people to help. The Hospitality Team not only provided the meals for the Presbytery meeting. They had Serious Soup the day before. Two days before that they had a funeral luncheon, and three days before that they had another funeral luncheon. The job that was done was fantastic. However, none of the work could've been accomplished without the people willing to say yes, I will help. Whether it is just a few hours helping on a special project for saying yes to be on a Ministry Team, remember that your willingness to volunteer is what makes our church great. In the coming months the Nominating Ministry Team will need your help filling vacancies on our church Ministry Teams. You don't have to be a member to be on a Ministry Team except, for the Trustees. Interested in a Ministry Team, but don't know what they do, or when they meet? Contact our church office and Debbie can provide Ministry Team Minutes for you to read, and let you know when a meeting is scheduled. You are welcome to attend a meeting or talk to the chairman of the Ministry Team you are interested in. When my term as Moderator is completed, I plan to be on the Trustees. - **Jim Delmore, Moderator**

STEWARDSHIP

By Jim Delmore

The Stewardship campaign is very important to our church. We are blessed to live without fear, and to have clean water and food. Let us share our wealth together. I am proud of all the ministry our church does, and it could not take place without your support. We serve our community with food, clean clothing, showers and shelter on a cold winter night. Our ministry teams are able to help people that we may never see or know. The seeds of love will make a positive difference in the lives we help. Our church is living the song "For Everyone Born". We are providing a place at the table for men and women, young and old. I believe the words in the song express how I feel, and I realize it takes a financial commitment to make our ministry successful. Please join me to show our support of the church by supporting the Stewardship Campaign.

WASSAIL SUNDAY

Sunday, December 15: After church

The Fellowship Ministry Team invites everyone to stay after worship to enjoy Wassail and cookies. Wassail is a traditional warm, spiced cider for the Christmas season for wishing a season of good cheer. Please join us!"

Contact: Linda Mohaupt mommoh54@gmail.com



ADVENT IS COMING! AND THE POP-UP PAGEANT RETURNS!

Sunday, December 22

We had so much fun and such a great response to last year's pageant that we're going to do a pop-up again this year! The script is slightly different but we still hope everyone will find a way to participate. On December 22, come a little early to get a costume. Then during the pageant part of the service you can hop up and take part. No rehearsals or memorizing necessary! We hope it will be a fun but meaningful part of Advent.

Contact: Jennifer Archer 815-623-1620

GIVING OPPORTUNITY: THE CHRISTMAS FUND/ CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Sunday, December 22

On December 22, we will receive gifts to the UCC and PCUSA funds that support current and retired church workers in need. The funds are used to help with emergency situations, housing, long-term care, health care costs, and supplements to small pensions. In this season of giving, we extend our gifts to those who were called to serve our churches with love and faithfulness. Thank you.



POINSETTIA SUNDAY

Sunday, December 22

We will be taking orders of Poinsettias through Friday, December 8. The cost this year is \$12.50. You can send or drop off your check to the office. Let us know if you want the Poinsettia in Memory or in Honor of your loved ones. Please include on your check: Your Name, Number of plants, and Name of Loved Ones.

YOUTH CORNER

Friday, December 13: 5:30-7:00pm

ALL CHURCH PARTY AND SECOND FIRST SCAVENGER HUNT

Friday, December 13 from 5:30-7:00 pm the All Church Party and first SecondFirst Photo Scavenger Hunt will happen. Bring family and friends of all ages, there will be snacks and crafts for the little ones in the dining room, while teams go around the church hunting down specific photo-op moments on a scavenger hunt list. Stay warm, capture some funny moments, have fun exploring our church, and of course celebrate the holidays with those you love. Please arrive by 6:00 pm for the scavenger hunt, there will be a prize for the first place team. Contact: aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org

Sunday, December 22: After service

YOUTH MISSION TRIP POTLUCK FUNDRAISER

Come join us in the dining room on December 22, after our Pop Up Christmas Pageant for a potluck fundraiser for our youth who will be going to New Orleans this summer to serve. High school and middle school students will gladly serve our community a yummy lunch in hopes that you can give a small donation back, therefore helping our young people continue to give back to those in need while gaining invaluable spiritual experiences and memories to last a lifetime.

Contact: aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org



January 3-5, 2020: Silver Birch Ranch

SNOW CAMP

This year snow camps theme is "Gen Z Spirituality" and our children will enjoy the winter weather in Wisconsin from January 3-5 at Silver Birch Ranch. Please make checks out to SecondFirst Church for \$75 and send them to Debbie in the Office by December 30. All families should be at church at 4:30 pm on Friday, and we anticipate our return on Sunday around 1:00 pm. Pack warm clothes, boots, snow pants, and a spirit of seeking God. Contact: aubrey.barnett@secondfirst.org



Director of Youth Ministry, Aubrey Barnett, sits with and leads the children during the Early Word.



Kris Delmore preaching at Sunday service.

Terry Mohaupt on percussion.



Music Director, Paul Laprade



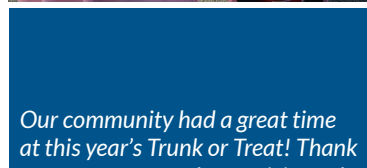
The Choir at Sunday Service.



The KFACT Open House took place after worship on Sunday, October 27. The turnout was wonderful. It's rewarding and inspiring to see this space transformed and serving our community!



Our community had a great time at this year's Trunk or Treat! Thank you to everyone who participated.



Muralist, Tia Richardson, gathers design ideas from the community.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

By Carolyn Greenlaw

Church has always been an important part of my life, and as a child in North Carolina, I have 3 memories that stand out. My first memory is of Sunday morning. My mother would put a roast and vegetables in a cold oven and turn the heat on as we left the house. Then we were off to Sunday School and church, my Dad was the minister. We always went to church! When we came home, the fragrance of dinner filled the house and we sat together for our delicious meal to celebrate and be thankful. That was a joyful part of my week.

The second memory as a child was the fun, I had running around the huge church buildings after worship, hiding from my friends, and racing about. Church was a happy place for children. The third memory I have as a child was my father's work as a civil rights advocate in the 1940's, in the South and later in Missouri. It was not an easy position to take at that time. His work, much more than his words taught me great lessons about the meaning of justice for all.

Of these 3 memories what was the single message taught? Be kind and love one another. My parents also reminded me to save 10% of my money and to give 10% to church and charities. Always do the giving first, everything else will fall into place. During good times and bad, it is still a wonderful goal as all of us strive to create a more loving world. As an adult, church continues to be an important part of my life. What do I look for now in a congregation?

When Second Congregational and First Presbyterian merged in 2013, it was a joyful day I will always remember. Our congregations met and joined together as one, outside, on the street. There were many smiles and tears. This union has been a blessing ever since that welcoming day. But wait, what church was I actually looking for as an adult? What kind of church would I choose in later life?

During this transition time as our churches joined together, I decided to take my time and visit several churches in Rockford to be sure our newly formed congregation was right for me as an adult. What was I looking for? I wanted a church that would embrace questions and encourage study before giving answers. I sought a church that celebrated diversity. I wanted to join a church that was clear in its goals to make our world a better place. I was looking for a church where children are not only the church of tomorrow but are the church of today. I wanted a welcoming place with outreach and service to others. I wanted a congregation with excellent music and a sermon that was meaningful and challenging. That was what I was looking for! How did my search turn out? I attended church twice at SecondFirst and I never looked any further. I had found what I was looking for. We had formed a congregation that continues to challenge us each week to worship, study, grow and serve.

So that is my story. What is your story? Here at SecondFirst we put each of our stories together to help create a church that moves the world toward love and justice, much more than we can possibly accomplish on our own.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

By John Lindblade

Hi, I'm John Lindblade. When David asked me to speak to you about what Church means to me, I did what I assume most happily married family men would do. I tried to get my wife to do it. To be fair, I had done a similar thing a few years back, and Jess is much better at this kind of thing.

But then, I started thinking about my need for Church and how it speaks to me has changed since the last time I spoke. When we first joined, it was just Jess and me. We loved that the Church challenged us to act. In my heart, I think Jesus calls for action at a personal level. To do the work, to go where you might not want to go, and spend time with those you might not be comfortable spending time with. I also think that there's a danger for people, when they're satisfied with their lives, sometimes we have a tendency to kind of fall asleep in our faith, and then that's when the Church needs to challenge us. I know there have been times when I needed it. This Church doesn't really allow for too much of that, and we appreciated that.

But now, my life is different. We are constantly chasing after the boys, driving to this or that appointment, making lesson plans, and there's little comfort time. The Church is now comfort for me. It seems far below the standard of the active, relentless Church I like to imagine, and I'm acutely aware that other people have lives that are far more difficult and legitimately challenging than my own, but it's nice to sit in a pew with my wife, together, holding hands. Quietly. To breathe and slow down. It's a few minutes a week when we can be together without the world trying to get in between. There is God in that, I think.

This church is also a place of comfort to our kids. A place where our boys are just as excited to see their young church friends as they are to see their friends Mr. Bruce & Ms. Joanne.

A bit back, a quote was used in the sermon. The Church brings comfort to the disturbed, and disturbs the comfortable. I like that. I like that you are all deeply disturbed. Me too. I still believe that we are called to act in service of others and to do the work. I am just now realizing that the other part might be just as important, maybe more. It is the togetherness, the closeness - the unique and wonderful relationships we build with each other.

DECEMBER CALENDAR

Sunday, December 1
 Becky Erbe Preaching
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
 10:00 AM – Worship Service
 10:20 AM – Sunday School
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, December 2
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, December 3
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Free Showers

Wednesday, December 4
 9:00 AM – Hospitality Team
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
 6:30 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, December 5
 9:30 AM – Carillons
 9:30 AM – Free showers
 5:30 PM – JD Meeting
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos
 7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, December 6
 5:30 PM – Pop Up Bell Rehearsal

Saturday, December 7
 8:30 AM – Boot Sorting Party
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, December 8
 Bell Sunday
 Terry Mohaupt Preaching
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
 9:20 AM – Peanuts
 10:00 AM – Worship Service
 10:20 AM – Sunday School
 11:00 AM – Potluck and Youth Fundraiser
 11:15 AM – Family CE Ministry Team
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, December 9
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup
 5:00 PM – Deacons

Tuesday, December 10
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Free Showers
 6:00 PM – DVT

Wednesday, December 11
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
 5:00 PM – Trustees
 6:30 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, December 12
 9:30 AM – Carillons
 9:30 AM – Free Showers
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos
 7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, December 13
 5:30 PM – Advent Photo Scavenger Hunt

Saturday, December 14
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic
 3:00 PM – “Very Carly Christmas”
 Handbell Concert

Sunday, December 15
 Sandy Williams Preaching
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
 10:00 AM – Worship Service
 10:20 AM – Sunday School
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour Wassail
 11:15 AM – Music Ministry Team
 11:15 AM – Fellowship Ministry Team
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, December 16
 11:30 AM – Serious Soup

Tuesday, December 17
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 9:00 AM – Thrift Shop
 9:30 AM – Free Showers
 5:00 PM – Missions Ministry
 6:00 PM – Executive Committee

Wednesday, December 18
 10:00 AM – Staff Meeting
 6:30 PM – Martin Ringers

Thursday, December 19
 9:30 AM – Carillons
 9:30 AM – Free showers
 5:30 PM – Governing Council
 6:00 PM – Bellcantos
 7:00 PM – Choir

Friday, December 20
 5:30 PM – Pop Up Bell Choir

Saturday, December 21
 10:00 AM – Bridge Clinic

Sunday, December 22
 Pop Up Pageant
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
 10:00 AM – Worship Service
 10:20 AM – Sunday School
 11:00 AM – Church Potluck Fundraiser
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, December 23
 No Serious Soup

Tuesday, December 24
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 No Thrift Shop
 No Free Showers
4:30 PM – Christmas Eve Service



Wednesday, December 25
 Christmas Day Office Closed

Thursday, December 26
 Office Closed

Friday, December 27
 No Scheduled Activities

Saturday, December 28
 No Bridge Clinic

Sunday, December 29
 Becky Erbe Preaching
 8:30 AM – Koffee Klass
 10:00 AM – Worship Service
 10:20 AM – Sunday School
 11:00 AM – Fellowship Hour
 11:15 AM – Fair For All Shop

Monday, December 30
 No Serious Soup

Tuesday, December 31
 7:00 AM – Men’s Prayer Breakfast
 No Thrift Shop
 No Free Showers
 12:00 PM – Office Closes

NEIGHBORHOOD NUMBERS
(October 28 - November 14)

SERIOUS SOUP
 Oct. 28: 96
 Nov. 4: 86
 Nov. 11: 46 (extreme cold)

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT: THE BRIDGE CLINIC OF ROCKFORD Free Medical Care for Area Adults without Insurance or Underinsured

GIVING: Writer Douglas Adams spoke to the power of giving: *“To give real service you must add something that cannot be bought or measured with money, and that is sincerity and integrity”*, it is our hope that The Bridge Clinic quietly fulfills this goal....

For those who struggle to put food on the table, a roof over their head, and pay the bills, a simple chronic disease or ear ache can leave many hungry, out in the cold, or without electricity in a heartbeat when one chooses to seek medical care. Even with the advent of the Affordable Care Act, paying both premiums and the co-pays are truly difficult for many.

Thus The Bridge Clinic came about. In 2008 four Rockford Memorial (Mercy) employees; Dr Siddiqui, Dr Rudzinski, Dr Olin, and Nicky Bennett RN-NP coupled with Holly Beeman, David Jones, Bob Langford and Linda Roy from the former First Presbyterian Church banded together to create a non-threatening vehicle from which to start the process for better health in our community for those who were struggling to make ends meet. An opportunity to educate patients about specific health issues and resources that may be available to them. All while re-establishing patients trust in the healthcare system as a whole.

It was, in essence a grass roots response to patients being seen in area ER’s who had no perceived or real access to primary care. The original goal was to see patients once or twice and to “bridge” them to other resources. It became clear over time that this was ineffective and The Bridge Clinic has now grown into a free small basic primary care clinic.

SERVICE: *“As one person I cannot change the world, but I can change the world of one person...” Paul Shane Spear, Comedian.* Over the years The Bridge Clinic has quietly existed on the fourth floor of The Second Congregational First Presbyterian Church, and has served around 5,500 patients in the 10+ years. Open on Saturday’s only from 10 am to 2 pm a Practitioner (NP

or MD) and a nurse provide primary care and (a lot of) education to adult patients who struggle otherwise to access healthcare for whatever reason. Coupled with a program to help patients access free or discounted meds as available.

We frequently treat high blood pressure, COPD, diabetes, do physicals, along with more immediate issues such as upper respiratory issues, urinary tract infections, skin problems, etc. Then not so frequently, but certainly some of the ones that we tend to remember; the; 58 yr old lady with a dissecting aortic aneurysm, 56 yr old lady we diagnosed with thyroid cancer, 45 yr old male diagnosed with colon cancer who after 2 years of treatment was transitioned to hospice, 44-year-old man diagnosed with TB, 72-year-old diagnosed with skin cancer, 62-year-old man who received a pacemaker, 64-year-old man diagnosed and treated with free medication for rheumatoid arthritis, two patients with COPD who were transitioned to hospice care, a 28 year old male diagnosed with acute kidney failure and uncontrolled high blood pressure who is now doing well and does not need dialysis.... We have also had the joy and privilege of telling 3 women that they are pregnant.

So, the question does not even bear asking, do we make a difference, well heck yes, we do...

ALTRUISM: *“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal” Albert Pike, Author.* The UIC Medical School students are also an integral part of the clinic in that The Bridge Clinic is often the very first clinical experience that these students experience.

Instilling in these future members of our community service to others is vital to their growth as human beings and the continued success of grass roots resources such as The Bridge Clinic in the future. Not only does a Medical Student shadow the practitioner each clinic day, another medical student who is fluent in Spanish provides

in person translation services and another student reviews each patients chart and schedules age appropriate screening tests, be it for high cholesterol, diabetes, prostate cancer, thyroid issues, mammograms, etc. all of which we are able to provide free to patients. It is worth noting that the 28 year patient above in acute kidney failure was only found to be so because of the UIC Medical Student ordering his routine screening lab work, so in all likely hood saving this young man’s life.

COMMUNITY: *In New Zealand there is a Maori saying, He aha te mea nui o te ao? He Tangata, he Tangata, he Tangata! What is the most important thing in the world? It is People, it is People, it is People....*

We are small, we do not have access to the resources that we wish we could have, but that is also true for many patients in healthcare with or without insurance and/or means. Between Mercy Health Systems, Quest Laboratory Services, PCI Services coupled with the amazing gift of a “home to hang our hat” the SecondFirst Church has made it possible for the volunteers at The Bridge Clinic to serve and provide basic primary health care to many of our brothers and sisters in the community over the years. It every day astounds me daily as a nurse and practitioner that we have this honor. We are so privileged and blessed to be able to serve others because of the generosity of you all. As much as the patients are central to this outreach, please know that without the generosity of ‘the people, the people, the people’ (volunteers, congregation, health services, UIC) The Bridge Clinic would not exist, and for that we humbly say thank you. Nicky Bennett, RN-NP and Clinic Manager.

Please, if you would like to come by and visit us, the door is always open, at least on Saturdays!
 Saturday: 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
 Free Medical Clinic for Adults (age 18+)
www.thebridgeclinicrockford.com
 (815) 494-1594
thebridgeclinic@outlook.com