

## **VIM Chat**

November 2004

### **Spotlight on Ridgedale Baptist Church**

What a difference 3 minutes can make! Starting with a short presentation to Ridgedale Baptist Church's Vision 21 Committee, Volunteers in Medicine is becoming a reality in Chattanooga.

In spring 2003, Nancy Franks learned about VIM's Hilton Head clinic from Liz Morton, the sister of VIM founder Dr. Jack McConnell. At a Ridgedale Vision 21 retreat shortly after, Nancy spoke briefly about the VIM clinic as an example of a successful community ministry. That 3-minute presentation was all it took. Dr. William Owens, "Brother Bill," Pastor at Ridgedale, recognized the group's great desire for the clinic and asked Nancy to lead an exploratory committee.

Before approaching the larger medical community, Nancy invited physicians and other healthcare professionals from Ridgedale and the retired medical community to view a documentary of the Hilton Head VIM clinic. The overwhelming response - "Keep going!" One of these doctors, Colleen Schmitt, is a member of Ridgedale. Dr. Bob Myers and Dr. Doyce Payne also encouraged the pursuit of the clinic. All three continue to volunteer tirelessly for VIM Chattanooga.

Nancy researched public records for data that would indicate if there was a true need for a free clinic in Chattanooga and then confirmed her information was accurate. One of the hospital executives helped get VIM's information in front of the Hamilton County Commissioners. An important early step was to inform them of our plans and ask for their support. This led to a meeting with State Senator David Fowler who was instrumental in getting the professional privilege tax eliminated for retired medical personnel who want to serve in a free clinic. Dr. Schmitt lent her expertise by testifying before state Senate and House subcommittees on the need to exempt medical volunteers from this tax. This law was a major milestone for VIM as it removed a barrier for medical professionals who want to give their time to the free clinic.

Although the idea and critical first steps began at Ridgedale Baptist Church, everyone there quickly realized this was a project that needed to be community-wide to succeed. A board of area church leaders was formed to spread the word to their members and carry the efforts forward.

Ridgedale Baptist Church's vision of VIM Chattanooga was always set on providing pure ministry - to offer services to qualified individuals without asking anything in return. That vision will be a reality in just a few months. Ridgedale Baptist made the first monetary commitment to put plans in motion and has over one hundred members volunteering their time and areas of expertise to VIM. They have laid the groundwork for the many other Chattanoogaans who are carrying this dream farther.

**TennCare.** We estimate that roughly 20,000 more people in the Chattanooga area will be without health insurance if something is not worked out concerning TennCare. This will likely impact the patient case load for VIM.

**Business Operations Committee.** The development of the VIM website is being donated by Intelligent Systems and Networking, Inc. The purpose of the site will be for communication with volunteers, potential donors, and the public at large.

**Facilities Committee.** A draft lease has been submitted to the owners of the property in the East Brainerd area where VIM hopes to build a permanent building. The draft lease requests a 30-year lease on 7.5 acres with a renewable option. The owners' trustees meet in December to review and act on this request. Please make this a matter of serious prayer.

Contributions of office and medical equipment continue to come in. We will receive two dental chairs in November from a generous dentist. These chairs are complete with lights and tools.

**Medical Services Committee.** Additional areas of interest discussed at the October meeting include education, laboratory services, and mental health services. Various tasks were assigned that include evaluation of CME needs and activities, work on treatment algorithms, obtaining funding and samples from pharmaceutical donors, evaluation of credentialing and licensure processes, review of preliminary schedules and coordination of providers with support staff, provider recruitment, and exploration of educational opportunities at the clinic for patients and students.

**Fund Raising Committee.** Area churches have donated or pledged \$50,500. First Tennessee Bank has pledged \$30,000, enough to cover one month of clinic operations. First-Centenary UMC has pledged one-half of its Christmas offering. The Tennessee Healthcare Foundation has asked us to submit phase II of our substantial grant request. The total grants submitted so far amount to \$445,000.

**Business Underwriting Program:**

- \$1,500 operates the clinic for one day
- 7,500 operates the clinic for one week
- 30,000 operates the clinic for one month

In this season of giving, any gift to the VIM clinic is welcome and no amount is too small to make a difference. Please consider giving a gift that keeps on giving by mailing to: Volunteers in Medicine, P. O. Box 81057, Chattanooga, TN 37414. See enclosure.

The date and time of the next general meeting of VIM volunteers and the various committees is **Thursday, December 2, 2004, 7:00 PM at Christ UMC.**

*Join us for a Culture of Caring!*