



*The HealthCare Connection*  
*50 Years of Providing*  
*Accessible & Quality*  
*Health Care Services*  
*to the Underserved*

1967-2017



Because Everyone Deserves Quality Health Care

# It Takes A Village

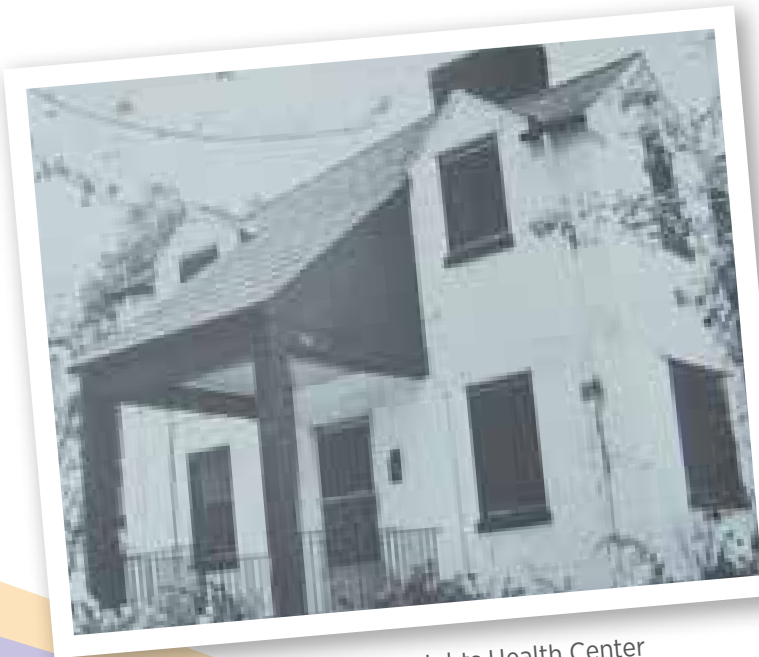
## 1960s

*The African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child," is widely known and used. It signifies the emphasis placed on the family and community in raising a child. During the past 50 years, The HealthCare Connection has been blessed to have had many diverse villagers helping us navigate the ever-changing obstacle course of health care. Our mission to provide quality, culturally sensitive and accessible health care services focusing on the medically underserved, underinsured, and uninsured was and remains wholly dependent on a village.*

*Take a journey with us as we reflect over our 50-year history and celebrate those individuals and organizations that contributed to our success.*



War on Poverty enacted



The first Lincoln Heights Health Center

### **From Concept to Reality: The Birth of Ohio's First Community Health Center**

In 1964, a group of Lincoln Heights residents gathered to identify the specific needs of the community to apply for funding through President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty program enacted through the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Act authorized the formation of Community Action Agencies and laid the foundation for many of the safety net programs in existence today, including community health centers and the Head Start Program. The community action agency in Hamilton County (now the Community Action Agency of Cincinnati and Hamilton County) identified 13 target high poverty communities in need of funding. Lincoln Heights was one of the communities. The group identified the lack of primary health care as one of several priorities for funding in their community. There were no doctors or dentists practicing in the City and no public transportation. Residents sought health care mostly when it was an emergency, and resorted to the emergency department of local hospitals even for primary care services.

The group established a health care subcommittee led by a young mother named Dolores Lindsay. Through their efforts and many others, on October 8, 1967, the Lincoln Heights Health Center, *the first community health center in Ohio*, opened in a four-room apartment at 776 Matthews Drive with a handful of volunteers, including physicians, dentists and Dolores Lindsay as a volunteer receptionist. The contributions of many toward one cause brought the health center to fruition and included the following notable individuals and organizations. **They were the pioneers.**

## **Penn Zeigler**

The Mayor of Lincoln Heights (1967-1971) was a strong advocate and instrumental in the Center receiving a \$10,000 grant from the City.

## **Rev. Canon James W. Francis Sr.**

Revolutionary pastor of St. Simon of Cyrene Episcopal Church in Lincoln Heights (1962-1971), was the first to propose the idea for a health center. His church was one of several that took turns paying rent and utilities to keep the center open in the very early years before federal grants were acquired. His diligence and dedication were vital to bringing the center to fruition, and he is considered one of its founders. The building on Matthews Drive where the Center was housed was owned by St. Simon.

## **Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr.**

Civil rights activist and pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church in Lockland, Ohio (1961-1975). His church provided financial and spiritual support to the Center, and he helped bring others to the table to make a difference.

## **The Faith Community**

St. Simon of Cyrene Episcopal Church; Ebenezer, Tabernacle, Mt. Moriah, Lincoln Heights, and Mt. Zion-Lockland Baptist Churches; Christ Church-Glendale; First Presbyterian Glendale; Wyoming Presbyterian Church; and Ascension and Holy Trinity Churches-Wyoming. These churches took turns paying rent and utilities to keep the Center open in the very early years.

## **Dr. E.T. Buford**

A family practice physician who recruited volunteer physicians and dentists. The first volunteers included Dr. George Hale, and dentists Dr. Charles Gibson, Dr. Don Hoffman, Dr. Fred Bronson, and Dr. Roland McGoodwin.

## **Ohio Valley Dental Society**

Provided monetary support and dental equipment and supplies.



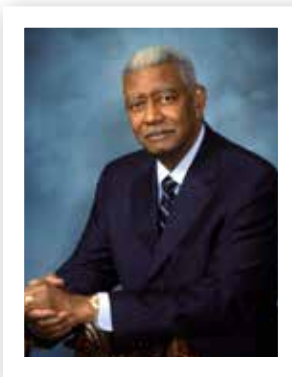
Penn Zeigler



Co-founder Rev. James W. Francis Sr. (left)



St. Simon Cyrene Episcopal Church



Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr.

## **Cincinnati Chapter of the National Medical Association**

Provided monetary support and volunteer physicians.

## **Cincinnati Academy of Medicine**

Provided monetary support and promoted the Center's cause through their membership.

## **Babies Milk Fund**

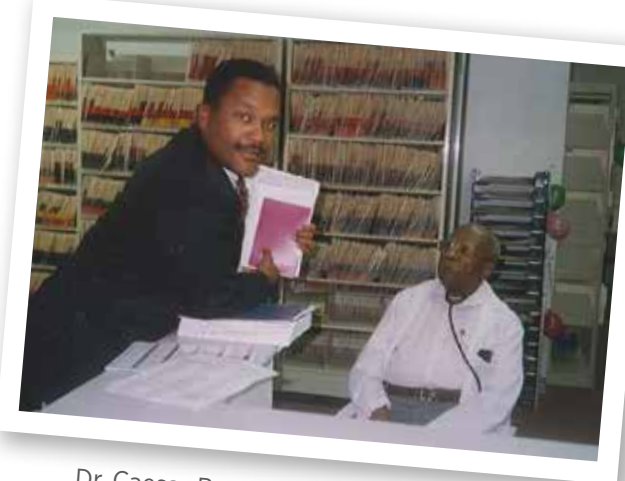
A Community Chest (now United Way) Agency headed by Dr. Robert Lyons provided professional staff including Dr. Marilyn Gaston, a pediatrician who had just completed her residency.

# 1960s

# 1970s



Second Lincoln Heights Health Center location



Dr. Caesar Bassette, Obstetrician (right)



Dr. Jessica Enriquez (2nd from left)

The 1970s were transformative years. Within a short span of time after opening, the Center had outgrown the space in the four-room apartment with the increased demand for services. As if by divine intervention, the Center was invited to become a tenant in the new Lincoln Heights Community Facilities Building. At about this same time, the Center learned it would receive direct funding for operations from the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) through the Ambulatory Patient Care Network. This made it possible for the Center to take occupancy in the Community Facilities Building in 1972, doubling its size.

## **The Staff and Services Expand**

In 1974 the Center received a Maternal and Child Health Services Program grant from the Ohio Department of Health that led to a major expansion of pediatric and obstetrical and gynecological services. An obstetrician in private practice, Dr. Caesar Bassette, joined the staff and it was through his efforts that patients were able to deliver at Bethesda Oak Hospital where he had admitting privileges.

The Center also appointed Dr. Marilyn Gaston as its first full-time Medical Director; hired Dr. Jessica Enriquez as its first full-time family medicine physician; hired a podiatrist, Dr. Henry McBride; and added pharmacy, x-ray, and clinical laboratory services. The Center truly became a provider of comprehensive primary care services with a practice model that was a precursor to the patient-centered medical home of today.

During this period, affiliations began with the Cincinnati Health Department, University of Cincinnati College of Medicine Intern and Residency Program, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the Sickle Cell Center, Hamilton County Head Start, the Hamilton County Community Mental Health Board (now the Hamilton County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board), and local social services agencies and school districts. A major milestone was being the first funded WIC (Women's, Infants, and Children) Program in Hamilton County. WIC continues today operated by the Cincinnati Health Department.

# 1970s

## ***The key members of the village at this stage were:***

### **Eddie Sellers**

A registered nurse with a passion for health care for the underserved and Director of Ambulatory Patient Care helped the Center write the grant application for OEO grant funds.

### **Former State Representative Bill Gradison Jr.**

As the representative of the Ohio First Congressional District (1975-1982) Rep. Gradison championed and believed in the cause of not only Lincoln Heights Health Center but all community health centers. With his expansive knowledge of health care he made inroads in health care legislation that still exist today.

***He was the first congressional legislator to become part of the village.***

### **Dr. Marilyn Gaston**

As the newly appointed full-time Medical Director, Dr. Gaston was instrumental in steering the Center to achieve many firsts including building relationships with the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the Ohio Department of Health, and many more. She was the consummate leader of the medical team and a visionary. She brought Pediatric Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants on staff before they were widely accepted by the general medical community. She saw the value they would bring to the team.



Former Rep. Bill Gradison Jr.



Dr. Marilyn Gaston

# 1980s

The 1980s brought challenges and new opportunities. There were lean years when federal and state funds were diminishing and posing a threat to the

Center's financial health. Medicaid managed care entered the arena in 1985 with many unknowns about the potential impact on the Center's patients and revenue, but the Center's perseverance was ultimately rewarded. In 1989 the Federal Qualified Health Center program was launched that established cost-based Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement for community health centers now referred to as Federally Qualified Health Centers or FQHCs. This new reimbursement strategy lifted the threat of financial instability.

## **Opens First Neighborhood Expansion Site**

At a time when Ohio Medicaid was just beginning to test enrollment of Medicaid recipients in managed care plans, the Center opened its first neighborhood expansion site in 1987, the Mt. Healthy Family Practice Center. The need for affordable health care in the City of Mt. Healthy was identified through the Center's community health needs assessment process that showed an increasing number of Center patients coming from Mt. Healthy. This was the beginning of the Center's pursuit of bringing primary health care services to communities outside of Lincoln Heights when a need was identified; and seeking private funding sources to supplement government grants.

## **Joins the Medicaid Managed Care Plan Movement**

The Center recognized the necessity for learning the workings of the new model, Medicaid managed care. Likewise, it was most important that the managed care plans recognized and understood the unique needs of Medicaid recipients and the barriers they encountered in accessing care. This was the Center's consistent focus when interacting with health plan leadership.

***Medicaid managed care plans became members of the village by necessity in order to continue the mission.***

## ***The internal movers and shakers during this period were:***

### **Marva Graham Moore RN, MPH**

Joined the Center's Board of Trustees in 1980, ultimately becoming Board Chair in 1989. She was instrumental in bringing stability and vision to the Board during a critical time when the Center was facing financial instability.

## **The Center's Staff**

During the years the Center was in the midst of financial instability the staff remained enthusiastic, committed, driven, and passionate. At one point many took a cut in pay and voluntarily worked more hours with less pay.

**Caring for patients was their top priority.**



Mt. Healthy Family Practice Center



Marva Graham Moore



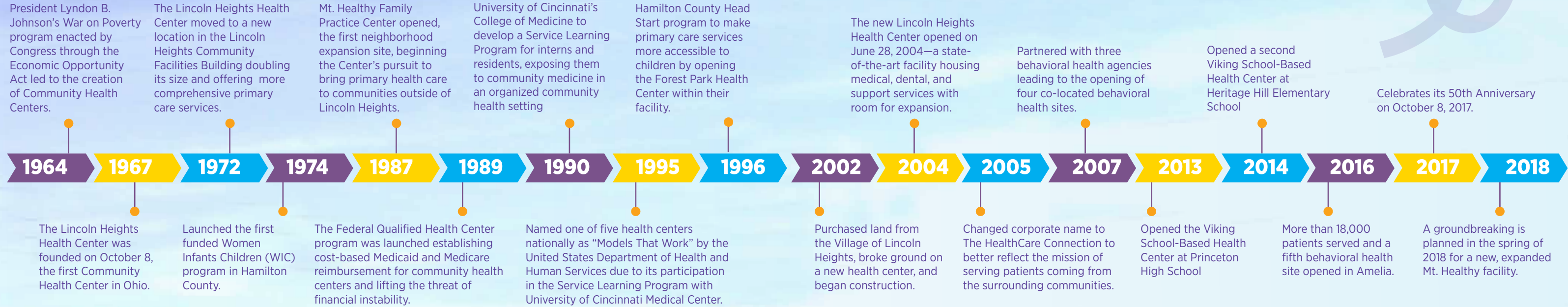
Committed Patient Care Team





# Key Milestones

## in The History of The HealthCare Connection



# 1990s

**Health care reform** was *the* hot topic in the '90s as the government grappled with the rising cost of health care. There was heated debate that trickled down to the state and local levels. Medicaid managed care was in a state of flux as health plans were leaving the market. In the midst of the turmoil, the Center expanded services and programs as new pockets of need were identified. To better reflect expansion into other communities, the corporate name **Lincoln Heights HealthCare Connection (LHHC)** was adopted in 1996.

## **Expands Services to Butler County**

In 1994, at the request of local government officials and community organizations (Butler County Commissioners, Butler County Community Action Agency, Mercy Hospital Systems and others), the Center began operating the Henry A. Long Health Center in 1994, and the Joseph Center in 1996. Both were funded in part by Ft. Hamilton Hughes (now Fort Hamilton) and Mercy Hamilton Hospitals. This continued through 1999 when both centers were closed due to the inability to generate the necessary financial support to continue.

## **Expands Relationship with the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine**

In 1990, THCC partnered with the University of Cincinnati's College of Medicine to develop a Service Learning Program for interns and residents. The Program was geared to educating and exposing interns and residents to community medicine in an organized community health setting. Dr. Bernard Lenchitz was one of the preceptors assigned to the Lincoln Heights Health Center to provide training and also see patients. Drs. Barbara Tobias and T. J. Redington later joined the Program in addition to others who were placed at Mt. Healthy Family Practice. These physicians stabilized medical provider staffing at a crucial time. The Program ended in 2013, but not without making an impact on a countless number of interns and residents, some of whom eventually elected to go into primary care as the result of their Service Learning Program experience. In 1995, THCC was honored by the Department of Health and Human Services as one of five health centers nationally as "Models That Work" due to their participation in the Program.



Brenda Coleman and Dr. T.J. Redington



National "Models That Work" Award, 1995

## **Opens a Second Neighborhood Expansion Site in Forest Park**

The Head Start programs initiated in the 1960s were successful and growing, and by 1990 President Bush had approved the single largest increase in funds for Head Start's expansion across the country. Hamilton County Head Start worked with Winton Woods School District to repurpose the old Kemper Heights school building at 924 Waycross Road in Forest Park for the expanded program, but funding guidelines required that families of children in Head Start have access to primary care. Passionate about the importance of education and health care for children, THCC Board Chair Jack Collopy, who also was the Hamilton County Head Start Director, stepped in with a commitment from Lincoln Heights Health Center. In 1996 two large classrooms within the school were converted to patient examination rooms and furnished, staffed, and operated by THCC. Today, it remains exclusively a pediatric primary care site and sees more than 1,700 children annually.



Sandra Torres, MA, with Pediatric patient



Forest Park Health Center



Jack Collopy



# The New Millennium: 2000 – 2017



Groundbreaking for new Lincoln Heights Health Center



Current Lincoln Heights Health Center

Similar to the 1990s, health care reform took center stage albeit with a slightly different cost-saving strategy based on the premise that improved quality of care reduces cost. Payment systems began to tie reimbursement to quality with a focus on wellness care versus sick care.

## The Board Makes an Important Decision

In 1997, after nearly 30 years of the Lincoln Heights Health Center being located in the Community Facilities building, the Board of Trustees, led by Marva Graham Moore, followed the Strategic Plan and decided to build a new structure. It was imperative that the Center have the capability to expand and offer more services. Additionally, the Community Facilities Building had deteriorated to the point where renovation was not an option. Enter divine intervention again!

In 2001 an opportunity to purchase land in the Lincoln Heights business district presented itself and THCC was able to purchase the property for the new center from the City. Having the land secured was a crucial step before applying for federal grant money from the Department of Health Education and Welfare (HEW) now called Health Resource Services and Administration (HRSA). Additional funding was required and an aggressive capital campaign began, led by the CEO and the Board. Within a year the necessary federal, state and private funding was attained for the building and LHHC proudly broke ground in 2002.

A shining gem of hope and pride, the new 42,000 sq. ft. Lincoln Heights Health Center at 1401 Steffen Avenue opened to the public on June 28, 2004. In addition to housing medical and dental services and administrative offices, there is ample space for further service expansion. It is the largest building in Lincoln Heights and one of the largest employers as well.

## Same Mission, New Name

With the realization that the centers were geographically and demographically reaching more people than ever envisioned, the Board of Trustees approved a second corporate name change in 2005; **The HealthCare Connection (THCC).**

## Primary Care for the Seriously Mentally Ill—A New Partnership

Among THCC's greatest assets are its affiliations and partnerships with other community organizations including The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati (now Interact for Health). In 2007, The Health Foundation approached The HealthCare Connection to discuss a new service model they had supported since 2000 that placed primary health care services within local behavioral health agencies to serve their behavioral health clients. It had been well documented that persons suffering with mental illness have a 25-year shorter life expectancy than the general population in large part attributable to the lack of preventive and routine health care—indeed a medically underserved population group. The Foundation was searching for a new primary care provider for three participating behavioral health agencies because of the impending departure of the current provider from the program. Later that year, THCC took on the challenge and gained three new partners, Central Community Health Board (CCHB), Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCB) and CenterPoint Health (now Talbert House); and four new practice sites. In 2016, THCC opened a fifth behavioral health co-located practice in GCB's Amelia site in Clermont County. However, as the result of an in-depth review of internal operations, THCC made the difficult business decision in March 2017 to close two of the original four practice sites in September 2017.

## Implements Electronic Health Record Systems

Conversion to an electronic health record (EHR) system that began in 2011 was fully implemented in January 2012. With the implementation of EHR and subsequent enhancements, THCC is better able to track patient outcomes, compliance with treatment, follow-up of referrals and hospitalizations.

## Partners with GE Aviation

In 2010, THCC received a two-year \$175,000 grant for both the Lincoln Heights and Mt. Healthy Family Practice Centers from the GE Developing Health Program to support expansion of dental and medical services. This led to an ongoing relationship with GE Aviation in Evendale. Staff has volunteered their time to work on a number of projects. One, designing a more efficient patient scheduling system, was so successful that GE Developing Health used it as a national model for Federally Qualified Health Centers they work with in other cities. GE volunteers have planned and sponsored THCC's annual Back-to-School Kids' Health Fair that has taken place in August during National Health Center Week since 2011. They have been an invaluable resource.



Dr. Melissa Lucas



GE volunteers and THCC staff

# The New Millennium: 2000 – 2017

## Integrates Behavioral Health Services

In 2014, THCC was successful in obtaining a federal grant to add on-site behavioral health services at the Lincoln Heights Health Center and Mt. Healthy Family Practice Center. Licensed Independent Social Workers (LISWs) are leased from Greater Cincinnati Behavioral Health Services (GCB) to provide the services. The addition of behavioral health professionals completed the multidisciplinary care team whereby care is delivered in a coordinated and patient-centered approach for improved health outcomes.

## Achieves Level 3 Patient Centered Medical Home (PCMH) Recognition

THCC was successful in achieving Level 3 recognition (the highest level possible) through the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in 2014 for the Lincoln Heights Health Center, Mt. Healthy Family Practice Center, and the co-located practice at GCB. Level 3 recognition means THCC has all the systems in place that demonstrate a commitment to quality improvement and a patient-centered approach to care. THCC literally transformed its patient care system to meet Level 3 recognition requirements. This was a two-year undertaking.



## Opens Viking School-Based Health Centers

In 2011 THCC was once again called upon to discuss the possibility of providing primary health care services to Princeton City School District students. District officials and THCC's CEO initially began exploring the feasibility of opening a school-based health center (SBHC) in the District in 2008. The formal planning process began in the spring of 2011 with the formation of a combined planning/advisory committee composed of a diverse group of stakeholders. The planning effort led to the decision to house the SBHC in the high school building serving only middle and high school students—the group identified as having the greatest need. After successfully obtaining an implementation grant from the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati (now Interact for Health), the first Viking School-Based Health Center opened in the high school in January 2013. It has since moved to Princeton's new Viking Village in the new high school/middle school building. In 2014, a second Viking School-Based Health Center opened at Heritage Hill Elementary School on Chesterdale Road in Springdale after being identified as another school with high need. The focus for both locations is to improve students' health and wellness, therefore increasing attendance, focus and learning. The motto is "Healthy Students - Better Learners."



VSBHC supporters



Elena Roach, PNP, with VSBHC patient

## New Mt. Healthy Family Practice Facility Moves Closer to Reality

After more than five years of scrambling for funds to construct a badly needed facility for the Mt. Healthy Family Practice Center, groundbreaking for a new building is planned for the spring of 2018. Currently, the 30,000 square foot facility at 1411 Compton Road is planned to open in 2019 and bring dental services to a community that lacks a safety net dental provider.



Proposed Mt. Healthy facility

## Our Vision, Our Future

For five decades The HealthCare Connection has remained steadfast in its commitment to provide quality and accessible health care to vulnerable population groups in northern Hamilton County and surrounding areas. Each decade brought different challenges, and the need to revisit how to best meet the needs of our patients and the community at large.

From our humble beginnings in a four-room apartment, we have persevered and our pledge is to continue to serve as the health care safety net for any group that encounters barriers to care. They will always be among us.



Dr. Riddle with Dental patient



Elena Roach, PNP, with Pediatric patient

**“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that is all who ever have.”**

**—Margaret Mead**







## A Tribute to Dolores Jean Lindsay



As The HealthCare Connection (THCC) celebrates its milestone 50th Anniversary, it is only fitting that the founder and leader for those 50 years, Dolores Lindsay, be recognized. Her vision and long-time leadership have been a driving force in THCC's success. Her quiet voice and persuasive style have accomplished much for the organization, including major funding. She is a visionary, team player, collaborator and consummate politician.

Often called the “dean of community health centers in Ohio,” she has been a mentor to a countless number of local, state, and federal health care professionals who sought her advice. Her passion for serving persons who lack access to primary health care services has been and continues to be the fuel that drives her every action. She has received more than 25 honors and awards including Cincinnati Enquirer Woman of the Year, YWCA Career Woman of Achievement, and the University of Cincinnati Health Humanitarian—all accepted with humility and grace, the essence of her character.

Over the past 50 years she has viewed challenges as opportunities and proceeded with determination and steadfastness never forgetting the mission. She is a firm believer that “Everyone Deserves Quality Health Care.”

**Thank you Dolores Jean Lindsay! You are a treasure.**

### **Mission:**

The HealthCare Connection provides quality, culturally sensitive and accessible primary health care services focusing on the medically underserved, underinsured, and uninsured residing in northern Hamilton County and surrounding areas.

### **Vision:**

We will be the leader in providing and managing affordable and quality health care services to meet the needs of a diverse patient population in a compassionate, collaborative, culturally competent, creative, and cost effective manner.