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About the Sharewood Project

The Sharewood Project is a free health education program that also provides limited health care services. Led by volunteer students and physicians from Tufts University School of Medicine, it opens its doors every Tuesday night from 6 to 8 pm at the First Church in Malden, offering services at no charge to underserved individuals from the Malden and the Greater Boston area. Students educate clients about healthy lifestyle, nutrition, exercise and the importance of medical wellness. Under the supervision of physicians and other healthcare providers, students also provide such services as school physicals, oral cancer screenings, confidential STD/HIV testing, and blood pressure screenings. A major focus of the Sharewood Project is its case management services, which connect clients with primary care physicians, health insurance, and other social services that they may need. For more information, visit the Sharewood website, <http://medicine.tufts.edu/Global-and-Local-Engagement/Sharewood>.

As a gateway into the American healthcare system, Sharewood is continually evolving to meet community needs. Community support, private philanthropy, and the enthusiasm and dedication of its volunteers are essential to Sharewood's services.

Sharewood Data (as of Sept. 2013)

Health Insurance

- 79% of clients do not have health insurance.
- 15% of clients have health insurance, mostly MassHealth.

Client Data

- Ages: 2-76 (most are in their 20s and 50s)
- 52% from Malden; others come from Greater Boston and north of the city.
- More than half of Sharewood's clients are born outside the United States; 20% have lived in the U.S. for less than one year.
- 64% are first-time clients.
- 34% are employed, 23% are unemployed, 20% are students, 8% are retired.
- 52% of clients speak English as a primary language.

Sharewood Services

- Case management services (assistance with MassHealth enrollment through the Massachusetts Health Connector, referrals to primary care and other services)
- Confidential HIV, sexual health, and STD testing and counseling
- Pregnancy testing
- Blood pressure screenings
- Seasonal flu shots
- Lab tests (limited)
- Vision screenings and optical services
- Dental and oral cancer screenings, oral hygiene counseling

- Nutrition counseling

History

The Sharewood Project was started by students at Tufts University School of Medicine in 1994 who, during their first year of medical school, conceived of a free program to serve underserved communities. After more than a year of planning, Sharewood opened its doors in Boston's Chinatown on February 18, 1997, under the guidance of Dr. Brian Lisse (Medical Director/Advisor, 1997-2001). Throughout the spring and summer of 1997, Sharewood adapted its services to the needs of its expanding client population. By August 1998, Sharewood had served 244 clients and overseen 465 client visits.

In the winter of 2001, the Chinatown location could no longer host Sharewood. After an extensive search, and with assistance from Dr. Joseph Gravel (Medical Director/Advisor, 2001-2009) and the Malden Tri-City Community Action Program, Sharewood successfully completed its move to Malden Center and reopened its doors in January 2002. It operates today out of the Fellowship Hall of the First Church in Malden.

Sharewood Today

Sharewood serves approximately 750 clients annually, many of whom do not have health insurance or do not know how to access healthcare services. Sharewood's goal is to educate its clients about common diseases, screen for some of those diseases, and most importantly, connect them with healthcare resources in their local communities. Clients speak a variety of languages, including English, Mandarin, Spanish, Cantonese, Haitian-Creole, and Portuguese. In 2012-2013, Sharewood established a collaboration with the nonprofit Found in Translation, which provides medical interpreter services to clients who need them.

Structure

Medical services are managed by volunteer physicians and faculty from Tufts University under the direction Gregory Sawin, M.D., Medical Director/Advisor. Dr. Sawin is also Assistant Professor of Family Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine and Program Director of the Tufts Family Medicine Residency at Cambridge Health Alliance.

The administrative responsibility for Sharewood is held by a board of 27 volunteer medical students from Tufts University School of Medicine who are elected to positions such as Case Manager, Physician Coordinator, Site Coordinator, HIV/STD Counselor, Finance, Fundraising, etc. Terms begin in January of the medical students' first year and run until December, when managing students are halfway through their second year.

Dental students and faculty volunteers from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine also contribute, as do physician assistant, nutrition, and public health students from Tufts. Undergraduate students from Tufts University also participate each week.