



# PCFC News Summer 2026

## You Matter

As we reflect on all the the changes the Free Clinic has experienced in 2025, one thing stands out bright and clear: **YOU**.

This year, we've had numerous Free Clinic changes: a new Clinical Programs Manager and Public Health Director, expanded clinical hours , added lab capacity, and growth in the number of patients served. **We couldn't do any of it without volunteer providers.**

At last count, we had 30 volunteer medical providers and 15 volunteer nurses on our roster. Between you all, we performed 579 hours of clinical care, 610 clinical consults, and we welcomed 152 new patients in 2025. You ROCK.

In 2026, we hope to continue to see you all regularly, to keep providing quality care, and to maintain our finger on the pulse of what is needed in our community. For now, please accept a heartfelt thank you for all you do.

## A Historic Look at Volunteers

The PCFC is turning 33 years old this year. PCFC was started in 1993 as a partnership between Mercy Hospital and the City of Portland. For 18 years, Mercy was a faithful funder. Funding ceased in 2011, and the Friends of the Free Clinic was created. Some volunteers have been with Free Clinic from the very beginning. Drs. Patrick Connolly and James Haller; and nurse Cathy Rand are three steadfast volunteers that still come in loyally to their monthly shifts. NP Peggy Akers, a longtime FC volunteer, is pictured here along with CHW Sara Fitzgerald.



## New (Returning) Director



Kathleen Fairfield served as Free Clinic Medical Director for 16 years. After a three-year hiatus (2023-26), she is returning to the position. Welcome back, Dr. Fairfield.

## Perla Ingabire is amazing!



Perla Ingabire joins us as our new Administrative Assistant, bringing expertise in organizational operations, fundraising, and project management. Her background emphasizes community-centered equity. Welcome, Perla.

## Portland Community Free Clinic Staff

**Sarah Sheldon, FNP**  
Free Clinic Medical Director  
Monday Evenings

**Nicole Vick, RN**  
Public Health Nurse  
Thurs evening

**Megan Evans, FNP**  
Per Diem Staff  
Tues/Weds Evenings

**Kathleen Fairfield, MD**  
Free Clinic Medical Director  
(advisory)

**Perla Ingabire**  
Administrative Assistant  
Monday-Thurs 8:30am-4:30pm

## An Exceptional Career: Cathy Randy



Cathy Rand has been with Free Clinic since it opened its doors in 1993.

*"I remember when Free Clinic had six charts! Over on Portland Street."*

She was seven years old when she decided to become a nurse, wanting to carry on the kindness she saw her mother pour into her Rumford community. In 1963, at age 20, Cathy received her RN license and went to work for Mercy Hospital. She stayed for 46 years; 41 of those on night duty. After retiring from Mercy, Cathy went to work for Comfort Keepers for 13 more years.

She retired again to take care of husband, Richard, who died of dementia five years ago. They had 57 years of marriage and a golden rule: every night before bed, they said, 'I love you'. After Richard died, Cathy made it a focus to take care of people with dementia, knowing the toll it can take on loved ones.

She still volunteers at Free Clinic the first Monday of each month, and gives Communion at Mercy and St. Joes. If it wasn't for computers, she says, she'd still be working at Mercy. Her golden rule for nursing: **listen to your patients.**

Cathy turns 84 this year, and is still going strong. In six years, when she turns 90, she plans to have her first drink ever. She thinks it will be a beer.

## A sad farewell to the person who started Free Clinic: Nate Nickerson

*Adapted from Preble Street's website tribute.*

The world lost a great human this year. For 15 years plus, Nate served as the first Executive Director of Konbit Sante, an organization whose name translates roughly to "working together for health." In Konbit Sante's words, Nate's greatest legacy "will live on in the thousands of lives he touched through decades of dedicated service to the people of northern Haiti."

For those in the City of Portland, he will be remembered as a hippie with a backpack in the chapel basement back in the 90s; the developer of so many of the City of Portland's Health Services for its most vulnerable residents, including the Portland Community Free Clinic, the Homeless Teen Clinic, and the first needle exchange program in the state. He was also one of the creators of Portland's Annual Homeless Vigil and a member of the Vigilantes music group. Much of the City of Portland's Health Services for people experiencing homelessness can be traced back to Nate's work with the Portland Health Care for the Homeless Program in the 1990s. Nate was a true partner and cared deeply for the people he served.

Nate passed away in May. **He will be missed.**



## New Referral Services

Thanks to successful fundraising by the Friends of the Free Clinic and advocacy by our volunteer providers, we're running trial referral services to **dentistry, optometry, and nutritional counselling** at no-cost to our patients. The services have been very well received.



Ask a us for information during your next shift!

## Maine Tort Claims Act

The Maine Tort Claims Act functions as malpractice insurance for city employees and volunteers, providing immunity from a broad spectrum of legal claims. Exceptions do exist, but usually apply to City property and machinery. Claims that arise from the discretionary acts by City employees and volunteers are generally immune from lawsuit. If a valid claim arises as a result of employee/volunteer negligence, as long as it is within their scope of work, the maximum amount of damage that the employee/volunteer can be individually held liable for is \$10,000.

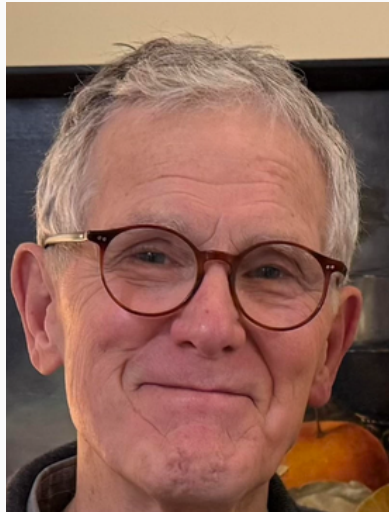
**The City does not carry separate professional malpractice insurance.**

## New Colleagues.

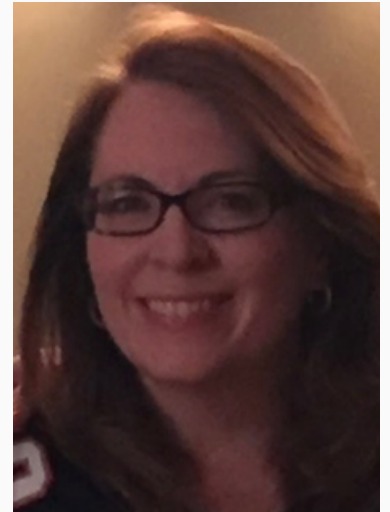
We joyfully welcome our new colleagues: FIVE volunteer doctors, ONE NP, TWO nurses, ONE EMT, and ONE psychologist to the Portland Community Free Clinic.



**William Cullen, MD, retired**



**Philip Ptacin, MD, ABFP, retired**



**Christine Sullivan, MD.  
Family Medicine. UNUM.**



**Erin Oakley, DO, Oakley Pine  
Family Medicine, private practice**



**Erin Hunter, FNP-BC**



**Elizabeth Mann, MSN, RN, PHMA  
Assistant Clinical Professor, UNE**



**Lauren Dattilo, PhD, Licensed  
Psychologist, Maine Therapy  
Collective**



**Elly Bengtsson, Emergency  
Department Technician, MMC**



**Kathryn Norgang, MSN, RN,  
Clinical Educator, Institute for Public  
Health Practice, UNE**