



OP-ED / PRESS RELEASE – TOMAGWA HealthCare Ministries

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SUBJECT: TOMAGWA Patient Load on Track to Double in 2014

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who responded to our earlier press release of July 15, 2014, and to encourage others to respond as the Spirit leads, for **the need is still great.**

TOMAGWA HealthCare Ministries has seen a steady increase in patients each year since opening its doors 25 years ago, but nothing like the explosive increase this year. At the mid-year point this year, TOMAGWA clinics have seen nearly as many patients as in all of 2013. We are on track to double our patient load over last year; our quandary is that our financial resources have remained essentially the same year to year.

The reality is that the face of health care has changed. In addition to the usual low-income, uninsured patients we have historically served, our waiting rooms are full of the newly unemployed, the newly part-time, and the newly uninsured. These new faces are refugees from the current health care storm, seeking access to care, which is increasingly difficult to find.

We believe the solution to the dilemma is **increased multi-year commitments and regular monthly giving**, to charity clinics like TOMAGWA, from a compassionate, concerned community. Allow me to explain. TOMAGWA clinics see about 16,000 patient visits per year. If clinics like TOMAGWA did not exist, studies by the Texas Medical Association (and others) indicate that the vast majority of low-income, uninsured patients would use their local hospital's emergency room (ER) for their non-emergent medical needs, knowing that they cannot be refused treatment. The average hospital ER cost for each patient visit is in excess of \$1,575 per visit. Simple math tells us that if TOMAGWA's 16,000 patient visits per year had to go to the local ER, instead of to a TOMAGWA clinic, the cost passed on to the community would be \$25.2 million. But, TOMAGWA treats those low-income patients for a much lower cost per patient visit (\$105); **a savings of \$23.5 million for the community.**

If each member of our community joined together to partner with TOMAGWA to take care of their neighbors-in-need, **one monthly-gift at a time, in a multi-year pledge**, we would never need to worry about burdening our community with higher-cost, over-crowded emergency rooms. At TOMAGWA, such regular

givers are called *ChangeMakers*. I would ask each of you to prayerfully consider becoming a member of the *ChangeMaker Society*.

When we sent the clinic press release last month, we received an almost instantaneous response from local media interested in running our story. We also received many emails and phone calls; some offering prayers, some lamenting the state of health care in the country, others offering moral support. In the midst of all that, a woman showed up in our lobby asking to speak to me. I went downstairs and sat with her for a few moments and she began to tell me her story. She was a widow, for a year or so now, and she was surviving on her social security. Then she told me she had seen our press release and wanted to give a donation to help those in need. She handed me a check from her social security income, which I tried several times to refuse. But she insisted, saying other people needed it more than she. I then realized that the widow's mite had literally walked into our clinic. (See Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4)

A short time later, I was called to the front desk to talk to a woman who had requested to see me. She had brought her son in, and he was very sick. She asked to speak privately, so I led her into an adjacent exam room and asked her how I could help. She began to weep as she told me that her son was very sick and they had no money for food, never mind medical care. I comforted her as best I could; reassuring her that God would provide. I told her the practitioner would evaluate her son and the pharmacy would provide the medicine as needed, and that she could return to pay the \$15 fee at a later date, if she desired, when the Lord's provision allowed. I then gave her a few \$10 gift cards, which had been given in response to our press release, so that she could buy some groceries. Her weeping turned from tears of sadness and hopelessness to tears of joy. "I knew that if I prayed, God would answer my prayers," she said.

I tell you that story to tell you this: First of all, I want the community to know that every gift you give impacts a real person with real struggles. I believe that God provides for those people and for this ministry through each and every compassionate heart who gives. Secondly, I want you to see that many of our patients are forced to choose between groceries or medical care; and more and more of them do not even have the luxury of making that choice. Their only recourse is to cry out to God for relief. And, I believe God answers their cries through those of you who give regularly to places like TOMAGWA.

If you are so led, you can give on line at www.tomagwa.org; but, for quicker impact, send your gift to TOMAGWA HealthCare Ministries, 455 School Street, Suite 30, Tomball, Texas 77375.

We want to again express our thanks to our steadfast core of donors and volunteers. Your giving remains consistent and strong; the demand for our services is simply escalating beyond your best efforts. We need the entire community to understand the circumstances and prayerfully respond.

By His Grace,

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