



OP-ED / PRESS RELEASE – TOMAGWA HealthCare Ministries

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SUBJECT: Community Responds to Help Fill Health Care Gap

Earlier this month, **TOMAGWA HealthCare Ministries**, a primary care safety-net clinic headquartered in the heart of Tomball's expanding medical center, sent out a statement saying that they had seen a steady increase in patients each year since opening their doors 25 years ago, but nothing like the explosive increase in patient load they are experiencing this year. At mid-year, TOMAGWA clinics (serving Harris, Montgomery and Waller Counties) had seen nearly as many patients as in all of 2013. TOMAGWA asked the community to stand up and join in, and help your neighbors-in-need. **And, stand up you did!** "Donations are starting to come in to ease some of the immediate financial drain on our system that the increased patient load has created," said Judy Deyo, TOMAGWA's chief executive. "On behalf of our patients, we are grateful to each person who responded, some giving for the first time, and others giving over and above their regular contributions. God bless you!" Deyo said.

Although the surge in contributions has helped, the demand for TOMAGWA's services has simply surpassed their financial capability to keep up with the high volume of low-income, uninsured patients seeking relief from the current healthcare environment. TOMAGWA's development director and pastor, the Rev. Steven G. Lightfoot, explains, "The face of health care has changed in our community, just as it has across the nation. In addition to the low-income, uninsured patients we have historically served, our waiting rooms are now full of the newly unemployed, the newly part-time, and the newly uninsured. These new faces are seeking access to care, which is becoming increasingly difficult to find. Sustainability is the thing; can we increase our financial support enough to meet the heavy demand long-term? Judy Deyo and I agree, by God's grace, and with your help, we can!"

TOMAGWA does not take Medicare, Medicaid or any form of government funding. The clinic is 100% community supported, and the leadership believes the solution to the clinic's financial dilemma is **fervent prayer** for God's faithful provision, and **increased multi-year commitments, along with regular monthly giving** from a prayerful, compassionate community. "If everyone gives just a little, and gives regularly, we can take care of much of the charity healthcare need in our service area," Deyo said. "People tend to think that if they can't give a large gift, then their gift is insignificant. Larger gifts are a blessing and always impactful, but smaller gifts given regularly also have a big impact. If just 100 people give \$25 a month

for a year, that's \$30,000! If they pledge that amount for 5 years, that's \$150,000, which amounts to quality health care for about 1,430 patient visits!" Deyo explained.

"A financial gift to TOMAGWA is really a gift to the whole community," Rev. Lightfoot said. "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**," Rev. Lightfoot explained.

"If each member of our community joined together to partner with TOMAGWA to take care of your neighbors-in-need, **one monthly-gift at a time, in a multi-year pledge**, we would never need to burden our community with over-crowded emergency rooms, increased taxes, or higher medical costs for paying patients at our local medical facilities," Rev. Lightfoot said.

TOMAGWA offers several ways to give, if you are so led. Two ways are: online at <http://www.tomagwa.org/#/donate-now> and by direct mail to TOMAGWA HealthCare Ministries, 455 School St. Ste. 30, Tomball, TX 77375. For additional ways to contribute and to find out more about TOMAGWA, please visit www.tomagwa.org. Also, the best way to get to know TOMAGWA is to tour our main clinic; call Tami at 832-559-5222, or request a tour online at <http://www.tomagwa.org/#/clinic-info-tours>.

TOMAGWA is a Christian ministry that, by the Grace of God and in response to the Love of Jesus, provides quality health care, offers hope and restores dignity to uninsured, low-income families and individuals in the Tri-County region.

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