

2024 Health Care Heroes: Community Weavers

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From left, Stacie Jasorka; Ikeyia Hicks; John Beiswanger; Cazembe Day; Lisa Jones and René Alford (IBJ photo/Eric Learned)

i Eskenazi Health

Honoree, Community Achievement in Health Care

Out on a cold-weather wellness check during January's subzero temperatures, Stacie Jasorka of Eskenazi Health Center's Pedigo clinic and a Horizon House staff member came across a man lying on a sidewalk. He had open wounds and couldn't move. He accepted their ride to Eskenazi's emergency room.

A couple of days later, the man came to Horizon House asking for a ride to the city's assessment center for substance abuse rehab. He was ready to address his addiction.

"Just seeing that people cared about him made a difference," Jasorka said. "He was like, 'Today is the day I need to get help with my other issues.'"

Jasorka is one of Eskenazi's Community Weavers, a team of six full-time outreach specialists who seek out underserved residents beset by barriers to a healthy lifestyle. These "social determinants of health" lead to a lower life expectancy and range from universal essentials

like direct medical care, transportation and food security to ordinary challenges like not having a car seat and pet care.

Dog-sitting might not seem like a priority for someone struggling to find food, but the “weavers” understand why it can be. Jasorka specializes in helping the unhoused population and once learned about a man in a health crisis who wouldn’t leave his cat to go to the hospital. “The cat was his only connection to any kind of family or support,” Jasorka said. She found a foster home for the cat, and only then would the man get into an ambulance—where he had to be intubated, such was the urgency of his condition.

Community Weavers works in seven Eskenazi clinics and its emergency room, acting as liaison to all manner of local, state and federal resources that the health care system’s population needs. Weavers know how to sign up someone for SNAP food assistance or doctor appointments, but they also find grassroots resources.

Eskenazi established the program in 2022 to address the 80% of patients’ health that falls outside of clinical care. The first year, weavers completed 1,306 tasks. The number tripled in the first half of 2023 alone.

In addition to Jasorka, the weavers are: John Beiswanger, Cazembe Day, Ikeyia Hicks, Lisa Jones and supervisor Reneé Alford.

The weavers get creative to find the people who need them, then they forge relationships that establish trust and respect. “We have weavers going to neighborhood association meetings on Saturdays. Some go at night. One goes to a laundromat every week,” Alford said.

Beiswanger, who works out of Eskenazi’s Grassy Creek clinic, is the laundromat weaver. He learned that Laundry and More on the east side allows free use every Tuesday and brings in not-for-profit vendors to connect to those customers. A line forms before Beiswanger arrives at 9 a.m.

The one-on-one attention goes beyond handing over a list of food pantries or free clinics. Weavers follow up and stay connected. They also build relationships with other resource groups, supporting one another through the challenging work and brainstorming solutions for someone’s care. Their efforts combine to form an individualized safety net for the most vulnerable residents in the city.

“We never give up on anybody,” Jasorka said. •

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