

Community Service

'Bundle of energy' keeps moving at his free clinic

Dr. James Burt has an intense awareness of the needs in his community and that drives his service, which reaches back to the 1970s and across Jacksonville.

His current focus is aiding underinsured through Volunteers in Medicine, the free medical clinic he co-founded in 2003.

"He has a deep desire to be of help to the underprivileged," said Gene Zimmerman, Burt's former pastor. "His mission to people who have fallen through the cracks has been with him from the beginning."

In 1981, Zimmerman met Burt and his wife as the couple distributed food and clothing to the needy in South Jacksonville through a community outreach program at Zimmerman's church.

A Jacksonville native, Burt began his career at the Duval County Medical Center as a counselor in the 1960s. A colleague suggested he go to medical school and loaned him money for living expenses. "That kind of generosity makes you want to give back to the community," Burt said.

Burt has retired from private practice and now, through Volunteers in Medicine, bridges the gap between health care and those at 150 percent to 250 percent of the poverty level. There was no program for the 40,000 to 80,000 who worked two to three jobs and couldn't afford health insurance,



James Burt
Co-founder

Volunteers in Medicine

but didn't qualify for poverty safety nets.

Burt, registered nurse Dottie Dorion, Dr. C. B. McIntosh and Zimmerman founded the free clinic in 2003. Burt and Dorion were the primary forces.

"They had the money, the charisma, the organizational skill to put it together," McIntosh said.

"Dr. Burt is a bundle of energy," Dorion said, "and is either going 110 percent or he is asleep."

The clinic began with 30 volunteer doctors and nurses, and now has 160.

On average, the clinic's doctors see 400 patients a month and they've seen 14,190 patients in the clinic's four-year history.

"When you see the relief on [the patients'] faces, that's the thing that makes it worth it," Burt said. "It's been a ride, but a very pleasant ride."

—Darell Johnson

McIntosh is a mentor for doctors and his patients

Dr. Charles B. McIntosh's career spans 60 years from private practice, to the board of directors for Wolfson Children's Hospital, to co-founding Volunteers in Medicine in Jacksonville and serving on the Commission for Funding Indigent Care.

Registered nurse Dottie Dorion has worked with him since co-founding Volunteers in Medicine's clinic in 2003. "C. B. has been a teacher all his life, and this includes not just aspiring doctors but families and the children he ministers to."

"[McIntosh] became interested in all 300,000 kids in Jacksonville and all the kids in Florida, and said 'let's take care of them,'" said Larry Freeman, administrator for Wolfson Children's Hospital.

McIntosh's work with needy people began in 1958 when he opened his first practice in Jacksonville. At the time, an office visit was only three dollars, but many he treated could not afford even a small fee.

"They're not paupers," McIntosh said. The patients work but only make ends meet. When illness strikes, "that's the breaking point." By treating people, he could help prevent more complicated — and expensive — problems.

"He is a very humble spirit but a giant man in helping," Freeman said.

McIntosh does not see unpaid care as vol-



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unteer service. "Volunteer service is when the patient has no obligation to pay."

McIntosh has held leadership positions with eight service organizations, including Volunteers in Medicine and the Florida State Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, which he helped found. Volunteers in Medicine provides medical care to those who cannot afford neither health insurance nor preventive medical care.

He has held national positions with the NAACP and has been appointed to the Duval County Medical Board, Florida Board of Medical Examiners and Florida Ethics Commission. He also was Jacksonville's first African-American pediatrician.

"Dr. McIntosh is a leader, a mentor, an educator," Freeman said. "He is one of the pediatric leaders and a champion for kids in Jacksonville."

—Darell Johnson