Uninsured assured by services from CVIM

In the state of Pennsylvania, nearly 10% of the adult population is without health insurance. The figures are about half of that percentage for children. Even if employed, fewer companies are offering the benefits of paid coverage for their staff. Now try to imagine what it would be like to have none and be without the means to pay for a doctor, dentist or emergency room visit.

In the latter half of the 1990s, Paoli Hospital's Foundation and Women's Auxiliary decided to join forces to address rectifying that situation by establishing a clinic setting for those that were uninsured. Their answer has turned into an organization called CVIM.

Community Volunteers in Medicine opened its first facility in Frazer in 1999. Since then the operation has grown exponentially, now having a permanent home at a former warehouse in West Chester. Last year 28,000 visits were made to the site for medical and dental appointments.

The secret to success has come not only from the center's volunteers, medical staff but those using their skills as interpreters. The working poor are often from other countries so language barriers do exist. With the exception of the medical director, Dr. Mary Winship, CEO Maureen Tomoschuk and a small support staff, the other doctors, nurses, dentists and hygienists hold unpaid (except in gratitude) positions. These are the healers, doing so to "give back."

A 15th anniversary party to honor the initiative was recently held at Brinkwood Stables in Malvern. Hosted by one of the first ladies of philanthropy, Carolyn Berman, the gala was a roaring success. Guests got to view the idyllic setting (horses grazed in the pasture amid a fall harvest) while being entertained by two goals from the Eagles cheerleading squad. Not to be outdone by their aerobics expressionism, team mascot "Swoop" courted up with wide-eyed attendees for memory-making photos.

Mid Kasee came on the event, during which those with five, ten or fifteen years of continual service to CVIM were recognized. "I've been there for the start and it's exciting to see how far we've come. No matter how many people have joined, there's always room for more."

United States Congressman Jim Gerlach, of the 6th district of Pennsylvania, stopped to chat with Trish Cotton of Malvern and spouse Robert, a CVIM board member. Janna Sherrill of Downingtown and husband Alan, also a board member and the Mahones of Malvern, Pam and Kevin.

Board member Stacy Simper of Paoli visits with fellow board member Mike Schnabl of Honeybook and his wife, Lori.

Fred Witzeling of Berwyn and CVIM volunteer Cathy Ronick of Radnor get a poetic view of the Eagles mascot, Swoop.

Dr. Charnush Mekala of West Chester heads to the buffet dinner with Elaine DeSimone of Media. CVIM's medical director Dr. Mary Winship of Glenmore and Bob Pascual of Media.

Barbara Haines of West Chester, CVIM social services coordinator Miriam Pinto and volunteer Mary Ellen Shone of Berwyn admire the table decorations.

Eagles cheerleaders Teresa and Jackie add pep to those rallying around the unique organization such as Betty Collins of Downingtown and CVIM doc, who's all about heart, Frank Harrison of Villanova.

CVIM board member Michael Buongiorno of Newtown Square and Joan Harrison of Villanova enjoy the company of Paoli Hospital president Jim Paradis of King of Prussia, Sue Cheung of Malvern, Mike Bolen of Rosemont and wife Patricia, a physician with the organization.

CVIM supporters, Larry Genuardi and his family's Genuardi Foundation executive director Meredith Huffman spend time with Bill Tomoschuk of Glen Mills.

CVIM volunteers Reggie Witzeling of Berwyn meets up with Joanne and Ray Walsh of Haverton and Denise Mahal, also of Berwyn.