

Message from the President and CEO

October 11, 2013

Dear Partners:

This fall, the REACH Healthcare Foundation celebrated its 10th Anniversary with hundreds of our current and former grantees, partners, Board members, Community Advisors and staff.

At two different community events, one held in Kansas and one in Missouri, I marveled at how each event felt like a family reunion:

- Even those family members you see often are excited to get together and share what's happening in their lives and work.
- Long-lost family members you may not have seen or heard from in years drop in unexpectedly and fall immediately into their familiar roles—sharing inside jokes and memories, and reflecting on how much, or how little, times have changed.
- Small differences and disagreements that seemed important 10 years ago now seem trivial when you've all had time to grow.
- Compromises and decisions made “way-back-when” in the spirit of family unity have resulted in a strongly woven, bright and diverse support system that holds us together through good times and bad.
- Shared values, beliefs and a common purpose have a transcendent power in bringing family together to remember then, reassess the now, and plan for our collective future



Watch Our Video

Foundation leaders and grantee partners reflect on the foundation's investments and changes in health care.

[Click here](#)

For me, it has been particularly powerful and poignant that our 10-year celebrations took place against the backdrop of implementation of the final phase of the Affordable Care Act—the highly anticipated launch of the Health Insurance Marketplaces.

Consider the foundation's original purpose, derived through a court settlement agreement, outlined below in an excerpt from the foundation's original Articles of Incorporation filed August 23, 2003, with the Kansas Secretary of State:

To engage in fund, carry on, conduct or take part in programs, projects and services designed to improve, protect and/or restore individual, community and public health in order to achieve outcomes improvements in access to, and the quality of, health care

and the overall health of individuals, particularly those who are medically indigent or underserved, and communities as a whole in the area formerly served by the Health Midwest system, but more specifically in Wyandotte, Johnson and Allen Counties in Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri, and Jackson, Cass and Lafayette Counties in Missouri.

So how has REACH done in fulfilling its legal obligations the past 10 years, and where do we go from here?

We have funded, conducted and taken part in projects and services designed to improve and protect individual and community health in our geographic service area.

Nearly \$40 million has been invested in our communities to date – support for critical health services for underserved people; providing technical expertise that has helped our community’s safety net providers transform their practices and prepare for a changing health care landscape; and helping create new and expanded health access points for primary care, oral health care and mental health.

While we cannot claim to have eliminated the access problem for thousands of uninsured in our service area, REACH has partnered with dozens of health service and advocacy leaders, and with our foundation peers on strategies that have measurably improved access and care. Now, with the launch of the Health Insurance Marketplaces as part of the Affordable Care Act, hundreds of thousands of previously uninsured individuals in our region will finally be able to obtain affordable health coverage.

Health care coverage isn’t the complete answer, but it’s an important beginning. As REACH enters its next decade, we have a lot of work – and opportunity – ahead.

In keeping with the foundation’s strategic focus on access and quality, we will continue to advance health reform and join others in calling for solutions that provide access to people who cannot take advantage of the health insurance marketplaces. They include:

- Childless adults who earn too much for the state Medicaid programs in Missouri or Kansas but too little to qualify for subsidies on the Health Insurance Marketplaces. Expansion of Medicaid is the place to begin.
- Undocumented people who contribute to our communities through their work, service and families. Illness and suffering have no regard for citizenship, and neither should our efforts to help all people achieve better health.
- People battling severe, chronic and persistent mental illnesses without resources for therapy, medication, housing and employment. New provisions in the Affordable Care Act hold promise for parity in access to mental health services, but we’re a long way from comprehensive and coordinated care.
- People who encounter cultural, literacy and/or education barriers when seeking health care. We need more providers who can engage patients by recognizing and

respecting their belief systems, and understand how cultural perspectives influence a person's ability to maintain their health.

Looking ahead to our next decade of REACH, here is what I anticipate:

REACH will continue to invest in programs and efforts that connect marginalized and underserved people to affordable, timely, culturally competent, quality care.

We will raise the expectations of ourselves, our partners and policymakers to increase *efficiencies* in the health care system while achieving meaningful gains in *health outcomes*.

The foundation's staff and leadership will continue to promote implementation of the federal health law in Missouri and Kansas, and work to ensure that there is adequate financial support for the health care safety net.

Over 10 years, we have developed relationships with key nonprofit partners who educate us about challenges and solutions. These partners will help us map out our future direction, just as they do today. We value and expect that feedback to continue.

So, in that spirit, we invite you to share your ideas, stories and recommendations with us regarding the next 10 years of REACH. You can contribute your thoughts at info@reachhealth.org.

We welcome your ideas!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda R. Sharpe".

Brenda R. Sharpe, President and CEO

Thoughts for the Next Decade of REACH

At a celebration luncheon held on Oct. 2, we invited guests to share their thoughts and ideas on future areas of work in health and for REACH.

We invite you to read through their ideas. [Click here](#). And then add a comment or suggestion of your own. [Comment](#)