

A noble calling: doctor sets up free clinic, Xmas party in P.C.

By Masha Rumer
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Every Wednesday at 5:30 p.m., a dozen or so women drive up to the Don Bosco Community Center in Port Chester. After parking their cars, they scuttle to the doors carrying heavy bags.

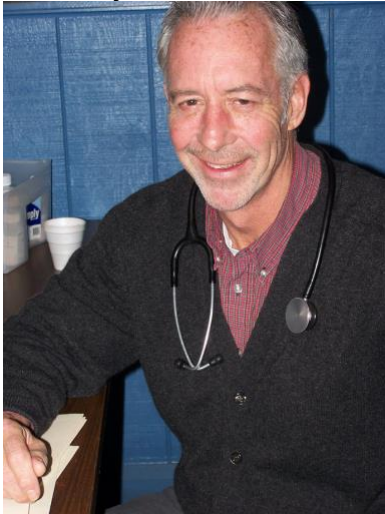
Minutes later, the Don Bosco Center dining room with blue painted walls is transformed, its tables covered with syringes, blood pressure monitors, hazardous material dispensers, scales, empty vials and medication packages.

The ladies take their spots next to the tables and chairs and wait.

Soon, people start pouring in from the cold outside—mothers with kids, young men, seniors.

This is St. Rita's Clinic, a free clinic run by a Mamaroneck family doctor, Dr. Kevin Maloney, and his staff of volunteers.

"Anybody can come, all treatment is for free, free antibiotics, free blood testing, basically anything you'd go to a family doctor for," Dr. Maloney, 53, said.



Dr. Kevin Maloney

"I've stitched people here. We've taken care of emergency situations," he added, referring to a defibrillator they bring along.

Dr. Maloney has been running his clinic, named in honor of his mother Rita, for 15 years, first out of

Mamaroneck's Holy Trinity Church and now in its second year in Port Chester. Holy Rosary Church provides space at its community center every Wednesday.

Dr. Maloney and his staff perform routine physicals, vaccinations, take care of upper respiratory problems and ear and throat infections, and give immunizations, followed by a lollipop for the kids. On some nights, Mamaroneck chiropractor Scott Cohen donates his services, too.

People come from Port Chester and beyond—Harrison, Mamaroneck, Connecticut and the Bronx.

If the patients don't speak English, administrative assistant Iliana Dunn greets them in fluent Spanish. After the patient is checked in, the nurses take their blood pressure, get their file that they keep right in the building, and sit them down in a row of chairs across from the nurses and a corner shielded by a white screen.

When the patient's turn comes, they go behind the white screen, where Dr. Maloney awaits to give a diagnosis and prescribe treatment. He sees 20 to 50 patients a night.

"He was very friendly and nice," said Priscilla, 10, from New Rochelle, smiling after the visit. Her mother Wanda learned about St. Rita's Clinic at Priscilla's school and brought her there for a physical. "He looks like he's a cool doctor, and the people here are great," Wanda said. "It is great to have a doctor like that, especially for people that right now cannot afford to see a doctor. They need someone like that in the community."

Because of the lack of private rooms, the clinic had to stop performing EKGs, breast exams, and pulmonary function tests, which they did previously.



Some of the nurses at the free St. Rita's Clinic run by Dr. Kevin Maloney at the Don Bosco Center in Port Chester recharge their spirits with coffee and cookies before an evening of work. From left, head nurse Angela Rigano, Rita Bisceglia, Loretta Rowen, Florence Angeletta, Ann LaMagna, and Helen Rowen (sitting)—keeping company with her daughter Loretta.

Loretta Rowan, a Port Chester resident and nurse for 53 years, 14 of them as a volunteer with Dr. Maloney, wishes they could have space with private rooms and the ability to leave their equipment, rather pick up and go each time, like a MASH unit.

“At least the people get to see a doctor,” Rowan said. “It’s the feeling of doing something good.”

Her colleagues, fellow volunteers, feel the same way. That’s why they keep coming back, some for all 15 years the clinic has existed.

“Medical care can be expensive,” explains Dr. Maloney, who sometimes stays as late as 11:00 in the evening. “There is a need for it always. And even though Westchester appears to be an affluent society, there are a lot of people who don’t have medical insurance and are just scraping by.”

But despite the little space and long hours of volunteering following a regular week at the office, Dr. Maloney, with his confident, deep voice, makes patients feel secure.

If they don’t speak English, he’ll speak Spanish to them.

If the case requires a specialist, he refers the patient to an affordable clinic, or else makes time to see them in his Mamaroneck office.

St. Rita’s Clinic subsists on community donations, and the doctor sometimes buys medication himself and gets samples whenever possible.

Dr. Maloney doesn’t like to get into long discussions about world poverty or extol his work. And he hates having his picture taken.

“I just always have been the type that feels you just should do your part in society to help others,” he says and changes the subject.

Father Tim Ploch, pastor of Holy Rosary Church, is however willing to sing Dr. Maloney and his volunteer helpers’ praises. “They are very generous and a countersign to the others that are only for business,” he said.

Annual Christmas party

Every year Dr. Maloney hosts a Christmas party and gives out toys to needy kids. He is inviting everyone to join this year on Dec. 23 at 6 p.m. in the Don Bosco Center.

Perhaps he got the idea from his dad, who used to dress up as Santa Claus and give out gifts to poor children. His five sons, aged 9 to 20, carry on the tradition and help distribute the presents.

Many patients bring the toys in, and Dr. Maloney is also asking the community to donate new unwrapped toys, especially for boys, since there is always a shortage of those.

The toys can be dropped off on Wednesdays at the clinic at Don Bosco Center or else in his office at 144 E. Boston Post Rd. in Mamaroneck,

Food donations will also be appreciated.

“He doesn’t like to give one—he gives a couple of gifts (to each child), said Mary Bardo of Mamaroneck, a clinic volunteer who helps patients fill out forms for blood tests.” “He’s really young at heart, let me tell you.”