

The logo for 'all in' features the words 'all in' in a bold, blue, lowercase sans-serif font. A small blue square with a white corner bracket is positioned at the top right of the 'n'.

CHICAGO



communityhealth



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**All In Chicago: Partnering for Innovation**  
*A Community Partners post from AmeriCares*

*Americares is a health-focused humanitarian organization that responds to people affected by poverty or disaster with life-changing health programs, medicine and medical supplies. In an effort to improve the treatment and management of high blood pressure in free clinic patients, AmeriCares collaborated with the University of Chicago and the Illinois Association of Free and Charitable Clinics (IAFCC) on the ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) Initiative. ECHO is an innovative model to train community-based providers to deliver care for chronic diseases in vulnerable, under-served communities. CommunityHealth was one of five free clinics in Illinois selected to participate in this project.*

*Today, AmeriCares shares more about this program from their perspective and why we can't talk about providing access to health care without also considering the quality of care provided.*

How do you improve health care for Chicago's low-income, uninsured population? It's a tough question being tackled right now by a unique partnership between Chicago's [CommunityHealth](#) clinic and [AmeriCares](#), a global nonprofit that believes in acting hyper-locally.

Americares' strategy focuses on local health clinics like CommunityHealth: when a community has a thriving hospital or clinic, the people in that community experience better health, more opportunity, and increasingly productive lives.

Americares currently supports more than 4,000 clinics, hospitals, and health posts around the world, including 1,000 in the U.S. and 22 in the Chicagoland area.

Americares is the world's leading nonprofit provider of donated medicine and medical supplies, collaborating with health companies like Chicago's [Abbott](#), [AbbVie](#) and [Baxter](#) to support people affected by poverty and disaster. Just last year, Americares provided CommunityHealth with more than \$100,000 in medicine and medical supplies—including enough medicine to fill 2,300 prescriptions at no cost to the patients. “To grow and thrive, people need access to quality health care,” says Americares Vice President of U.S. Program Lindsay O’Brien.

Medicine is just part of the equation: Americares and CommunityHealth are also partnering on unique projects to improve quality, expand capacity, and collect data on health center activities, so both the clinic and Americares can continue to meet the needs of individual patients, the community, and the health workers who provide care.

Take, for example, patients with stubborn high blood pressure: these patients often pose a challenge for primary care providers, as typical treatments are ineffective. Instead of sending patients with resistant hypertension on a long journey to a specialist, Americares helped connect the specialist—via technology—directly to CommunityHealth clinicians. The clinicians presented their cases to the hypertension specialist, along with staff from other free and charitable clinics in Illinois treating similar patients. The information exchange was guided by the specialist, and ideas for treatment—different combinations or timing of medicine, for example—were discussed among all participants.

The project was the first time a group of free and charitable clinics tested this model (known as [ECHO](#) and run by [ECHO-Chicago](#)). The project opened the door for more ECHO projects for free clinics nationwide, created local experts in stubborn hypertension at the participating clinics, and resulted in real health gains (reduced blood pressure) for more 900 patients.

ECHO is not the only collaboration between Americares and CommunityHealth. To guide CommunityHealth to meet standards and performance measures set by the [National Committee for Quality Assurance](#), Americares is providing the clinic

with the resources it needs on a much larger project – an effort to obtain certification as a Patient-Centered Medical Home in 2019. The standards reviewed by this process focus on the patient experience—comprehensive, team-based care that is accessible and focused on quality and patient safety—proven to result in higher quality and lower costs. The result is a true medical home for patients, a goal worth striving for. “Quality of care is of prime importance to both CommunityHealth and AmeriCares,” says O’Brien. “It results in better care for the most vulnerable patients—those who are low-income and uninsured.”

*Each year, AmeriCares reaches more than 90 countries and all 50 U.S. states with over \$500 million in innovative health programs and quality medical aid. AmeriCares is the world’s leading nonprofit provider of donated medicine and medical supplies. CommunityHealth is proud to partner with AmeriCares to continue to provide access to better quality care in the Chicago area.*

***Are you all in? Join us as we continue the conversation to build a healthier Chicago in 2018. To learn more, please visit [www.all-inchicago.org](http://www.all-inchicago.org).***