

# 2014 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



## Empowering Our Communities



Atlantic Health System

# EMPOWER AWARD WINNER

Jeffrey T. Liegner, MD



## Heart for Humanity Newton Physician Brings Free Medical Care to Those in Need

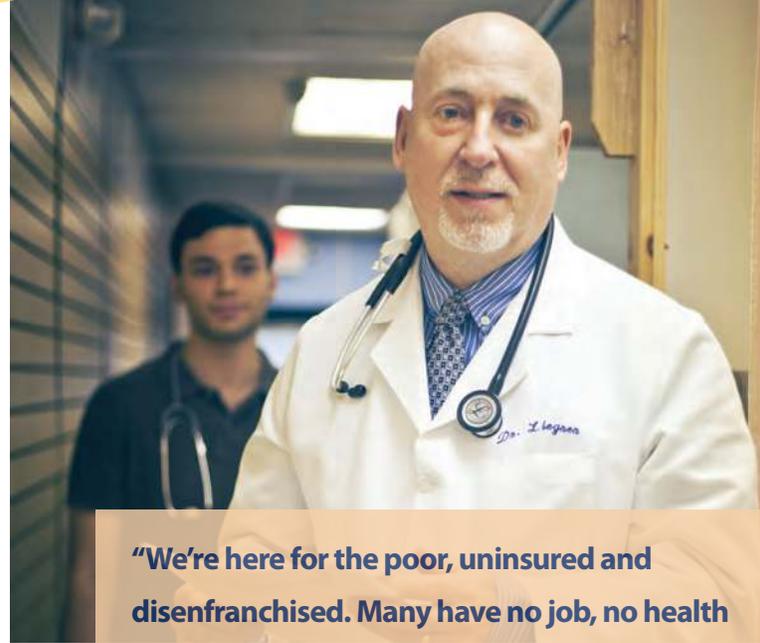
While most physicians dedicate their careers to serving patients, Jeffrey T. Liegner, MD, has dedicated his life to creating healthier communities.

In 2012, Sussex County native Dr. Liegner opened a federally recognized free clinic in downtown Newton — following years of research, community partnership and the solution to a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. “I needed a way for doctors to provide free care without medical liability, so I hunted for an answer and found one,” he said. The key was to create a nonprofit entity, which essentially transferred liability to the federal government — so doctors could donate their services without the burden of malpractice insurance or the risk of personal lawsuits.

What began modestly with a few volunteers in a space donated by Moose Lodge 432 has evolved into a bustling clinic on High Street, where individuals can find free urgent and ambulatory health care. “We’re here for the poor, uninsured and disenfranchised,” explained Dr. Liegner. “Many have no job, no health insurance and no place to turn other than the emergency department.”

Dr. Liegner points out that forty percent of the clinic’s 1,700 patients report that they would go to the hospital if the clinic was not open. “That represents a savings of approximately \$800,000, since we can provide care for a fraction of the cost,” he said.

More importantly, the Newton clinic provides a lifeline for many people who suffer from diabetes, hypertension, asthma and other chronic diseases. “A number of these patients have



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**— Dr. Jeffrey Liegner**

prescriptions, but can’t afford to fill them,” he noted. So in addition to free medical care, the clinic often provides free medicine as well.

Three years after opening its doors, the clinic is supported by an army of volunteers and benevolent partners — including physicians, nurses and other health professionals, as well as Newton Medical Center, corporate donors and caring individuals.

“We don’t charge anybody, anything, ever,” he said. “So I’m always stunned when I go to the donation box at the end of the evening and find \$50 or \$100, in crumpled up bills. Our patients are radiantly grateful for what we do, and our staff glows brightly because of it.”

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