

Over 5,000 diapers donated to VHC Pediatrics

Lydia Antonio-Vila/Fairfax County Times



A community in Arlington County came together to donate over 5,000 diapers to Virginia Hospital Center (VHC) Pediatrics, a medical center that serves patients living in low-income households. The donation was impactful for the clinic and even more impactful for the families.

Michelle Altman, Patient Care Director for VHC Pediatrics, explains that the center provides comprehensive medical care for children ages 0 to 18, including mental health services and a nutritionist. Before the pandemic, the clinic was seeing 80-100 patients a day, which came out to about 1,500 a month, and they usually give out 10,000 vaccines per year. Now, they're still at an 80% capacity.

As to the donation, Altman explains it was incredibly helpful. "It was a group of people that came together. Essentially, someone that knows about our clinic reached out and said they'd like to help so we told them these are pediatric patients, their biggest needs are formula, wipes diapers," she says. "So, this small group started reaching out to friends and neighbors and the turnout is fantastic – 6,000 diapers, 12,000 baby wipes, formula, diaper rash cream – it was an amazing turnout."

"When you talk about our patient population, 15,000 visits a month, this is a huge donation that will make a very big impact on our patients. These patients are low income, so they don't have a lot of disposable income to use. And things as simple as diapers, formula, that's a stress for them," says Altman. "By having this donation, we can give these families a box of diapers, a bottle of formula, and you just see the relief that comes across them because it's one less thing they have to worry about."

VHC Pediatrics has adapted their practices to continue to provide care during this time. Now, they see healthy children in the morning (such as newborns coming in for checkups) and sick children in the afternoon (not necessarily COVID-19 cases) in order to not mix the healthy and sick. They have also started to do video visits.

As to advice for patients, Altman says that it's imperative to try to remain as calm as possible. "Listen to what the leaders are telling us as far as staying home, socially isolating," as well as wearing a face mask. "If you need to talk to somebody," she adds, "do it from 6 ft. apart. Don't take your children to the store with you if you don't have to." All of these things are going to help keep the spread of the virus down.

The clinic is located at the intersection of Columbia Pike and Glebe Rd in Arlington, accessible on multiple bus routes. If you would like to do a supply drive for the hospital or make a donation of food supplies to the front-line staff, please contact the Virginia Hospital Center Foundation at foundation@virginiahospitalcenter.com or 703-717-4653.