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## **People, families, health saved with help from Hearts that Care Clinic**

"Without their wonderful assistance, I don't think I would still be alive," said Charlene Donovan, 56, Lawton, who has lupus and is a long-time patient of the Hearts that Care Health Clinic in Lawton.

DAVID HALE  
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A former retail sales clerk who is unable to work or afford health insurance, and is ineligible for Medicaid - a state-run, federally funded health care program for the working poor - Donovan said the medications she receives have helped her fight the disease that is attacking her immune system.

Debra Gauthier, 51, Lawton, echoed similar a sentiment. She and her husband have been Hearts That Care Health Clinic patients for a year since he unexpectedly lost his job with a uniform rental company two days before a scheduled surgery. She said didn't know how her family would have survived without the clinic.

"I love them," she said. "They treated us with respect and dignity."

Hearts That Care Health Clinic is a member agency of the United Way of Lawton-Fort Sill. The clinic assists members of the community who do not have health insurance and do not have access to doctors and clinics. Staffed by a cadre of about 25 community volunteers, the clinic opens its doors on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month and usually sees 35 to 45 adults with appointments. Patients typically have chronic health problems, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma and thyroid conditions. Dr. Wendy B a r -

tanen, a Lawton family practitioner, is chairman of the board of the 501(c)(3) charity that runs the clinic. United Way provided \$25,000 last year for operations, she said, and about 90 community physicians and drug companies provide the medicines that aid the quality of life of patients, while Lawton businessman Jeff Sadler donates the clinic facility at 304 Southwest A.

"We have to pay utilities and for paper products and things like that," said Bartanen, who added that the clinic served 800 to 900 different patients last year, providing all kinds of medical services. "We are able to do this because we have no paid staff," she said.

Bartanen said she doesn't believe the health care law passed by Congress this year will mean the Hearts That Care Health Clinic will be going out of business.

"It's fine to require people to get insurance, but it is an affordability issue," she said. "The state requires car insurance, but it is not unusual to be in an accident with an uninsured motorist."

Gauthier, who lived in Enid before coming to Lawton, is most appreciative. She said the clinic arranged for the drug manufacturers to provide the medicines that she and her husband need.

"I never thought that would happen, and I don't know what we would have done without them," Gauthier said.

"It's really incredible that each of the clinics' volunteers and medical staff members have jobs, and they come down at night after working all day to help us by drawing blood, dispensing medicine and doing what is needed," Donovan said. "I am so thankful."