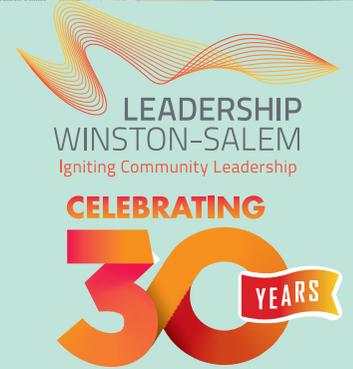




LWS graduates Doug Maynard and Margaret Elliott pose inside Crisis Control's Free Pharmacy.



J. SINCLAIR PHOTO

HEALING FORCE

How LWS helped launch Crisis Control Ministry's innovative Free Pharmacy.

“Sit next to someone you don't know.” Those simple directions to participants riding on a bus to a Leadership Winston-Salem class sparked a crucial conversation between Doug Maynard, then chairman of radiology at Bowman Gray School of Medicine, and Ginny Britt, then executive director of Crisis Control Ministry.

Today, as a result of that conversation, the Crisis Control Ministry Free Pharmacy fills more than 40,000 prescriptions each year for people who cannot afford their medications.

“People were having to make the decision whether to buy groceries or fill their prescriptions,” says Margaret Elliott, executive director of Crisis Control Ministry. It's a challenge that continues today.

When Britt explained the situation, Maynard suggested a simple solution: collect drug samples that doctors received and distribute them to people who could not afford their medicine.

Maynard contacted the medical community to ask for help. Volunteers collected donated medications and popped the pills out of the packets. Maynard talked to Ron Small, a pharmacist at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center, who volunteered and persuaded other pharmacists to volunteer to dispense the medications. Crisis Control's pharmacy became the first licensed free pharmacy in North Carolina when it launched in 1987 and has served as a model for others. “To me, the story is just that everybody pitched in,” Maynard says. “We're not talking about dozens of people—we're talking about hundreds.”

These days, the pharmacy serves 600 clients and fills more than 3,300 prescriptions each month. The pharmacy has an annual medication budget of \$240,000, which it leverages to provide medications with a \$4.2 million retail value. Volunteers collect donated medications from four nursing homes, and they help clients

sign up for drug manufacturers' Patient Assistance Programs. If there are no other free options, Crisis Control will purchase medications for its clients. The pharmacy is open to residents of Forsyth and Stokes counties who are in need of life-sustaining prescriptions but can't afford them. While there are no set financial guidelines for age or eligibility, clients must demonstrate a true financial need.

“There are more people now needing medications than when we started,” Elliott says. “The people who are the poorest of the poor still need our services.”

As funding and sources for donated medications changed, the pharmacy has adapted and thrived.

“What Leadership Winston-Salem did is get it started,” says Maynard, 1987 LWS graduate, “but what your community has done is keep it going. The important thing is sustainability: You've got to have people in training that are willing to pick it up. We've had champions that have appeared whenever we needed a change.”

Britt has said in the past that the pharmacy was “born on a bus.” “I just love that idea,” says Maynard. “It's basically putting people together. It let me associate with people from all different walks of life and all different occupations. In the medical center, I had not been able to do that.”

To donate to Crisis Control Ministry's Free Pharmacy, go to crisiscontrol.org and visit the donation section.

—KATHY NORCROSS WATTS

This article is the fourth in a yearlong series on Leadership Winston-Salem as the program celebrates its 30th anniversary. For more info on the program, go to leadershipws.org.