

## Happenings

### Personality: Michael B. Matthews Spotlight on board president of health care group

For the longest time, Michael B. Matthews studied statistics and quantitative methods. But his deep desire was to go into a field more helpful to people.

So, after attending graduate school where he studied public health, he began using his education to focus on health disparities and health issues important to the community.

Now 51, Mr. Matthews serves as president of the board of directors of CrossOver Ministry, a 22-year-old, faith-based collaboration. Through three free clinics located in the Bainbridge and Broad Rock communities of South Richmond and the Bensley area of Chesterfield County, CrossOver Ministry provides quality health care to thousands of low-income metro Richmonders each year.

That makes Mr. Matthews very happy.

"I rather be doing this than anything else," he says. "Contributing to the needs of the community and connecting with people is important to me."

Nationally, about 40 million people are without health insurance, Mr. Matthews says. In Richmond, about 47,000 people are uninsured.

CrossOver Ministry becomes a place of comfort and aid, where families can receive without charge a range of health services, including primary care, pre-natal care, dental and vision care, as well as cancer screening, HIV treatment and specialty care.

Mr. Matthews points to statistics to dispel common misperceptions about the people who need and receive free health care in metro Richmond.

"The vast majority are the working poor," he says. "They are not homeless. They have a home and they work every day, but they can't afford health insurance."

And they don't all live in Richmond, he says. The need for free health service is as great among residents of Henrico and Chesterfield counties as it is in Richmond.

"There's a common misperception that there's only affluence in the suburbs. But that's false," Mr. Matthews adds.

Because of the need in Henrico County, CrossOver



Ministry is opening a clinic next month on Quioccasin Road, near Regency Square mall. A grand opening is planned for Oct. 15.

Health care and health care issues consume Mr. Matthews. In his daily life, he is CEO of Central Virginia Health Network, a health management services organization that serves more than 900 physicians; and MedVirginia, a regional health information organization backed initially by Bon Secours Richmond Health Systems.

His role with CrossOver Ministry and its board of directors is a volunteer one. But he takes it seriously.

"There are so many unmet health needs in this country, in this state and in this city," he says. "We need help right here at home."

As this week's Personality, Mr. Matthews talks about why he became involved with CrossOver Ministry and its plans for the future.

**Date of birth:** Nov. 13, 1953, (Friday the 13th!), in Wadesboro, N.C.; raised in Mt. Croghan, S.C. (population 124).

**Current home:** Henrico County.

**Alma mater:** University of North Carolina, bachelor's degree in mathematics; and master's in public health.

**Family:** Wife, Marybeth; daughters, Molly, 20, and Aline, 16.

**Other leadership roles in community:** Urban League Board of Directors.

**Our program began because:** Twenty-two years ago, a group of Christians involved in Needle's Eye Ministry recognized the need to share their own good fortune with those less fortunate who lived in inner-city Richmond.

**CrossOver services are important because:** Caring for our neighbors is the right thing to do. It is pragmatic as well. Access to health care for all people is crucial to a community's economic and social well-being.

**Our financial support comes from:** A diverse array of individuals, foundations, corporations, associations, patient donations and, of course, the faith community of greater Richmond.

**Number of people served by CrossOver:** In 2004, we served 4,219 individuals through the provision of more than 19,000 patient visits. More than 92 percent of our patients have annual incomes of less than \$20,000 and 59 percent have annual incomes of less than \$10,000. Only 7 percent of our patient population is currently homeless. Most have homes and jobs, and most live in families of three or more.

**Who qualifies for services:** CrossOver Ministry serves a vulnerable population that includes children, the elderly, low-income families, the working poor and people in crisis. CrossOver's eligibility criteria — uninsured and low-income; that is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which is \$19,140 for an individual or \$38,780 for a family of four.

**No. 1 challenge:** Living with the reality that despite the efforts of CrossOver and other safety net providers, the needs of the medically underserved continue to grow.

**How I plan to address it:** Continue to communicate, continue to partner and continue to pray.

**Favorite childhood memory:** Summer vacations at Lake Waccamaw, N.C., keeping an eye wide open for gators.

**What people think when they first meet me:** "Pretty

quiet for a big guy."

**My friends like me because:** I'm supportive and available...also easy to beat in golf.

**Some things I can't stand:** Being late; cold coffee; bridges; a UNC loss in basketball; a closed mind.

**Nobody knows:** I'm able to snatch quarters off my elbow, one time coming within 3 quarters of the Guinness World Record.

**In a perfect world, my job would be:** Doing exactly what I'm doing. I am truly blessed to be in what I consider my perfect job. I work with a talented and dedicated team.

**If I could have my wish, it would be:** That my daughters would have meaningful and rewarding lives, with joy and happiness in great abundance.

**Favorite vacation spot:** Wintergreen.

**Favorite color:** Carolina Blue.

**Car:** 2003 Honda Accord.

**Favorite flower:** Rose.

**Favorite pigout food:** Potato chips.

**Prized possession:** My late grandfather's pocket watch.

**Persons who influenced me the most:** My parents, always stressing the importance of family and doing your best at whatever you do.

**The book that influenced me the most:** "Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls" by Mary Pipher, a must-read for dads to understand the pressure facing their adolescent daughters.

**Best time of my life:** Holidays with family and friends.

**What I like most about Richmond:** It's just the right size. It's big enough to have a variety of cultural and entertainment options and small enough to be very "live-able."

**My next goal:** Launching our community health information technology initiative this fall; and providing physicians with secure access to clinical information that will make caring for patients safer and more efficient.