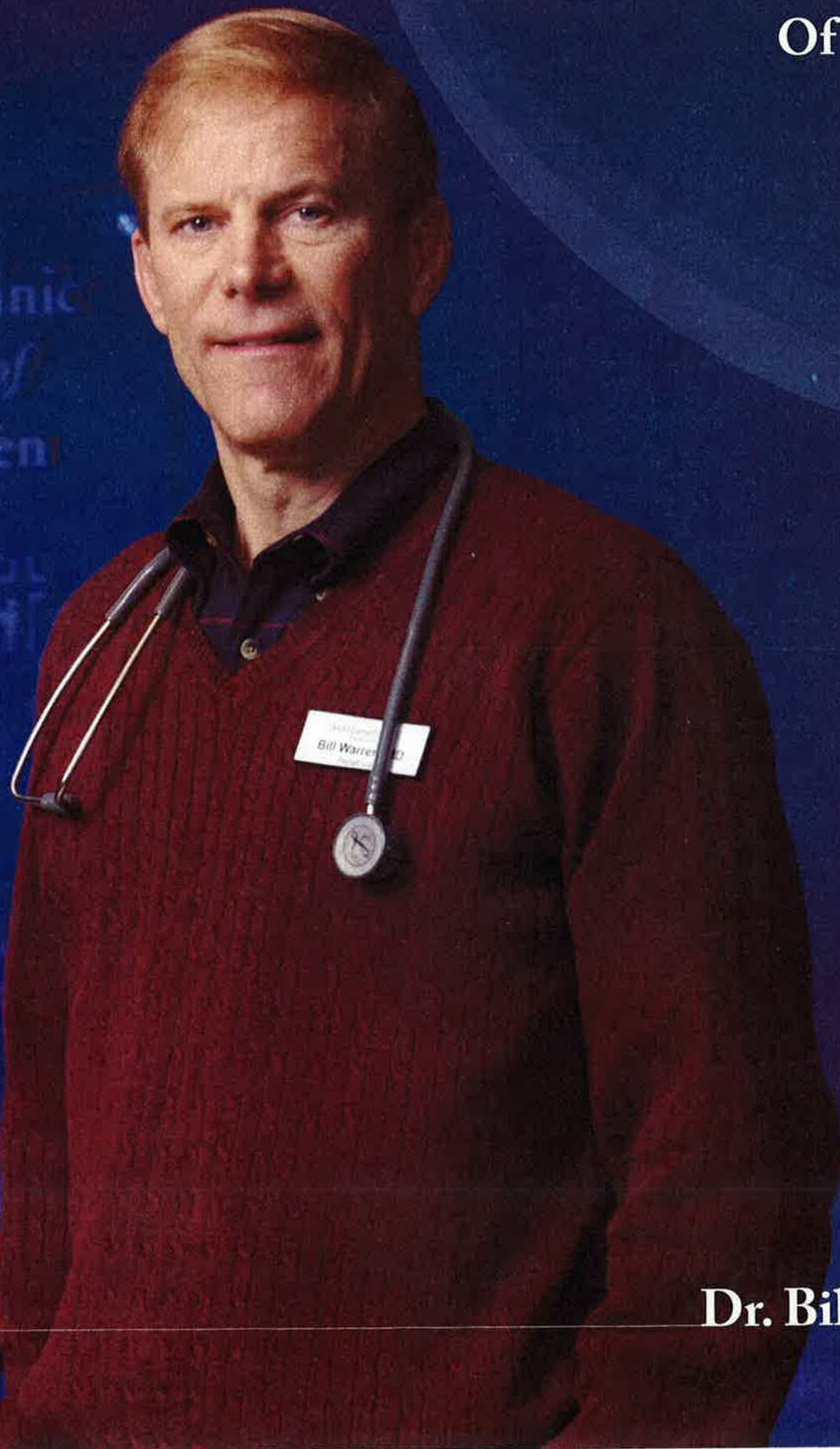


PHILANTHROPIST Of The Year



Dr. Bill Warren

The Good Doctor

What does a pediatrician with a thriving family practice in the suburbs do for an encore? For Dr. Bill Warren, the answer is in the faces of all those less fortunate families he cares for every day.

By Rozelin Sol

What would make a successful pediatrician with an established practice leave his career? You might not think there is an easy answer. But Dr. Bill Warren begs to differ. Still you ask yourself. Why did this Atlanta native with an M.D. from the Emory University School of Medicine, postdoctoral training in general pediatrics from Emory, and course work on managing and leading a not-for-profit organization from Harvard Business School simply walk away?

Warren says the answer was easy. And he didn't walk away. With a thriving Sandy Springs practice that helped care for children ranging from infants to young adults 19 years old, Warren knew his calling was to serve his community. But sometime in 1995, he started to feel like the other side of Atlanta's income bracket was being neglected. It was a calling he couldn't ignore.

With a decision based on his faith, he established The Good Samaritan Health Center (Good Sam) in 1998 and opened for business in 1999. "I really felt inspired that this is something that God wanted us to do, to care for people and therefore show the love of Christ," Warren says.

Good Sam's mission is simple: to provide service to people who traditionally would

not have access to care. The clinic serves the homeless, the working poor and those who do not have medical insurance. The goal is health service at minimal cost. It is not a free clinic, but rather a reduced sliding fee clinic that caters to individuals on limited incomes. Individuals receive care on a reduced rate based on their income and family size.

Risk meets Reward Head On

As Warren stepped into the world of providing healthcare to low income families, there were obstacles. For starters, he had to adjust his practice to serve a broader clientele, from babies to adults, and everyone in between.

There also were difficulties in raising money to keep the Center running. Some 70 to 75 percent of its operating expenses are funded through donations. Warren also had to find financial donors to help meet the salaries of his medical team. Of the Center's \$2.4 million operating budget, only 25 percent of it is paid for by patient fees. Over the years, Good Sam has received a number of monetary, in-kind contributions and stock gifts from a number of area individuals, businesses, associations and community groups.

Warren and his team have found great reward in helping the less fortunate. "They

appreciate the fact that they have a place they can come where people care for them," he says. "We not only provide them with the health care they need, but also provide them with a listening ear and a warm hug – a place where they feel accepted and they are treated as a first class citizen."

From the cradle to the grave, Good Sam, located at 1015 Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway in Atlanta, offers broad and holistic health care for the entire family. Because of its heavy volume, patients are advised to make appointments. Upon their first visit, patients must bring a photo ID, proof of income, unemployment letters or letters confirming their residency in shelters (if applicable).

The Center's main services are dentistry, such as hygiene, root canal therapy and dentures, and pediatrics and adult medical health, including vaccinations, sick visits and check-ups. Good Sam's subspecialties are orthopedics, cardiology, physical therapy, radiology, pulmonology, mammography, Ob-gyn, and gastroenterology.

The Center also offers health education in areas such as diabetes, asthma and nutrition. It also provides social services by helping people navigate the complexities of their medical needs by referring them to institutions that could provide further care.



The new Good Samaritan Health Center opened for business on 1015 Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway in 2009.

In addition, the Center provides an onsite dispensary where patients can get the proper medication before they leave.

Finally, Good Sam provides services on mental health issues and provides biblically based counseling to individuals, families, adults and children. Services include praying with patients, offering love and support, and sharing the word of the Gospel.

Volunteerism as the Heart of the Center

From the onset, the Good Samaritan Health Center encourages and appreciates volunteer work in providing services to its more than 24,000 in and out patients. Volunteers provide the Center with extra pairs of working hands and skills, establish good community relations and serve as goodwill ambassadors to the communities.

The Center estimates its annual volunteer hours at more than \$400,000. A recent census reflected that Good Sam had 152 volunteers and 7,521 volunteer hours. Mostly, Good Sam received volunteers as healthcare professionals, support staff, and business and front office assistance. "We love having volunteers, mainly because they expand our service and allow us to care for more patients," Warren says.

Apart from money and time, expertise in the medical field also is needed, as the Center is always looking for radiologists, dermatologists, dentists, family practice physicians, pediatricians, optometrists, neurologists and nurses, among others. Professional volunteers are given continuing

education credits for their charity work. Medical and dental boards recently have adopted rules to accommodate more time for their volunteer services. The Center also welcomes help from Spanish and Portuguese

acceptance. From Day One, the Center has received positive and negative reactions from members of the community. On one hand, it was uplifting to see the many kind responses and wishes from people in the community,

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interpreters, and those who can serve on the prayer team and prayer room ministry.

Volunteering takes a few easy steps. Fill out and submit an application form, and attend a volunteer orientation, which ranges from one to one and one-half-hour at the Center.

Life Lessons

Getting incorporated. Finding a site. Raising money. Recruiting staff. Creating programs. The work has been exhausting, while the reward has been priceless. "If you have a dream, you can work real hard at it and you can make it work," Warren says.

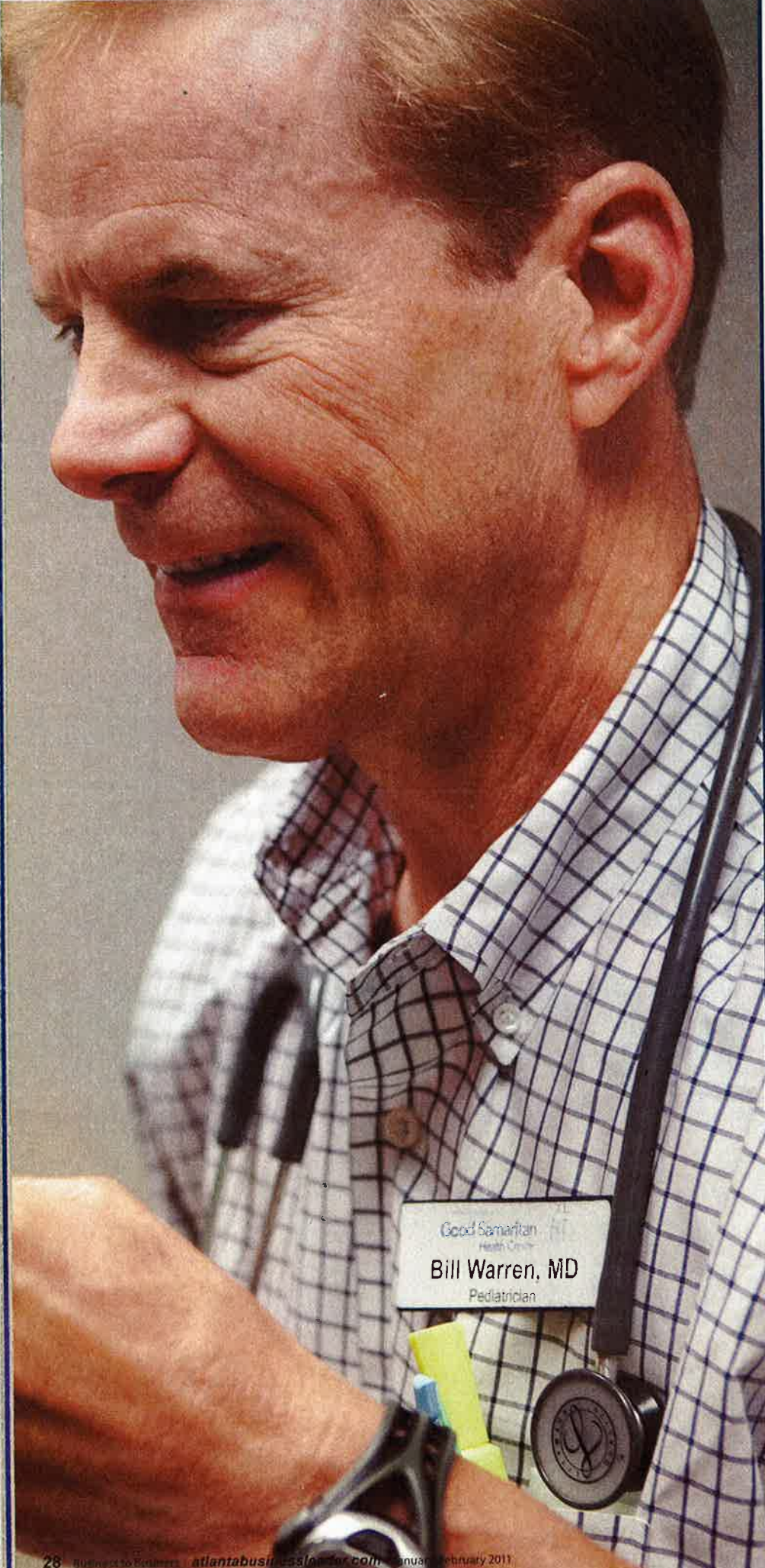
He cites another interesting lesson he learned during the process – that of

many of whom lent a helping hand during the process. On the other hand, there are still those who don't share in the Center's objectives (many believe Good Sam caters to illegal aliens).

But Warren believes that it is not his team's job to qualify whether a patient is legal or not. That's for the government to decide. Their job is to provide health care when needed.

A Look into the Future

In the near future, Warren is seeking opportunities to expand the Good Sam operation. One possibility is to extend the Center's evening hours and on each Saturday of the month provide round-the-clock service. Likewise, he hopes Good Sam will be able to



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push through with the opening of a wellness Center and teaching kitchen where people can learn to manage their health through regular exercise and proper nutrition.

And what about all that health care reform talk? Warren is confident that Good Sam will continue to provide service regardless of what shakes out. As long as there is an acute need for the Center, it will continue to find innovative ways to render optimum health service to people in need.

Dr. Bill Warren wouldn't have it any other way. **B**