Narrator:

The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program, keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson:

MSU Care is a free and charitable clinic for the uninsured, underserved population in the community. To qualify for the services and resources, people must be 18 to 64 years old, and the income must be at 150% or less of the federal poverty level. I'm Nicki Donnelson. Today on the Missouri State journal, I have Jaime Gnau. She's a clinical dietician at MSU Care and also a clinical instructor of MSU’s dietetics program.

Jaime Gnau:

For the patients, I do a lot of one-on-one visits with them. A lot of my work focuses around diabetes, weight management, um, developing a healthy relationship with food, GI, all kinds of stuff. So, lots of different avenues where dietician's needed for health. We also just started a new program. I'm really excited about it. It's called habit new. All of our patients are eligible for it. So, the cool thing about MSU Care is that our patients receive all these different services and they're free. They don't have to pay for their exams. They don't have to pay for their labs. They don't have to pay for their medications. It's all free if they fit within the guidelines that you know, they can be a patient with us.

Nicki Donnelson:

MSU Care is a partnership with Mercy. In fact, the overseeing physician and many of the support staff and other individuals are Mercy employees. They work alongside MSU faculty to provide all the health services to individuals for free. Gnau shares about the challenges patients are facing and how she helps them.

Jaime Gnau:

Our patients have a lot of barriers. So, as you can imagine, they're fighting fires every day. They deal with challenges of just meeting their basic needs. You know, we see homeless populations. We see patients that are struggling to pay their bills, to take care of, feed their kids, feed themselves. So really, they're, they have all of these huge priorities that are, they're struggling to meet. So as far as my position, as a dietician, it's really about helping them set achievable goals, right? That's focused on their health because when you're not able to pay your electric bill, or you're not even able to have a house, access, a stove to cook, to be able to store refrigerated foods where you're really focusing in on what is within your control, let's see how we can, um, develop some, some small achievable goals that you feel confident you can reach. And that's, that's great, right? So, letting them know that that's a great step in the right direction and they don't have to set these huge lofty goals that, that seem unattainable.

Nicki Donnelson:

Gnau served on a task force to strategize about the necessary adaptations for services during COVID. Instead of feeling defeated, she's excited to share about some of the new partnerships, especially one for food boxes and collaboration with Ozark’s Food Harvest.

Jaime Gnau:

So, the clinic never closed. We didn't close our services, but we changed the way we offered our services to patients so we could do it in a safe way. I deal a lot with patients that have diabetes and many of those patients are on insulin. And if you don't have a consistent food source, while you're on insulin, it can be very dangerous. They don't have food access. So, at this point we're feeling very helpless. What can we do? I reached out to Ozark's Food Harvest and explained the situation and asked what type of help we could get and as far as food resources. Um, and I had this whole plan of how I wanted this to look, and I explained it to her, and they just absolutely came through. It was amazing what they did for us. I mean, our food boxes, we've served 30,427 pounds of food since the program began, so, that's a lot, right? And you need manpower to do that. So initially, I thought we were going to have to use volunteers, student help to be able to pack all these food in the boxes and get them to patients. But Ozarks food harvest took our food recommendations, and they made the boxes. They deliver them to this already pre-packaged so the patients can just grab one on their way out the door. They're eligible for one a week. If there's a situation in which they really need more, we work with them. So, uh, we were happy to also add on produce. Uh, we don't have a lot of refrigeration space at MSU Care, so we have, uh, one delivery every other week where the patients that they can come in and grab a bag of fresh produce and take it with them. Um, as a dietician, I think that was really important to me is that the food in these boxes and the food that we're giving to patients, they’re health promoting foods, low sodium vegetables and sauces, and canned foods, whole grains like oatmeal, brown rice, canned tuna, canned chicken, things that are health promoting. It was really important to me that these boxes were not only meeting their energy needs, but nutrient needs as well.

Nicki Donnelson:

For more information, visit MSUCare.MissouriState.edu. That was Jaime Gnau. I'm Nicki Donnelson for the Missouri state Journal.

Narrator:

For more information, contact the office of university communications at 4 1 7 8 3 6 6 3 9 7.