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## Op ed: Fourth Street Clinic makes me proud to be a Utahn

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I came to Utah, from India, almost 10 years ago. At first, I was unsure if I would like this foreign place thanks to the snickering reaction of my co-passengers when I mentioned my destination. Some of them warned me about a predominant faith and a culture that I knew nothing about. But before I could even consider their warnings, I had to face the numbing cold that greeted me when I got off the flight in early December. Utah's frigid air and scant oxygen became the first shock for me to overcome.



After almost a decade of living in Utah, I never felt the need or desire to leave. I graduated from school here, married here, bought a house, and paid taxes as a resident. I learned to dress warmly in the winter and took up snowboarding. In summer, I enjoy the breathtaking scenery while hiking in the mountains. I adhere to my family's long-standing faith and have a great respect for the others who do the same. Utahns have been great friends, neighbors and coworkers to me. And every day I realize how wrong those outside and uninformed judgments were about this state's people and culture.

While all my experiences have helped me understand and appreciate Utah, I really had no reason to be especially proud of this community. It was just another great place to live. But my feelings changed when I visited the Fourth Street Clinic for a tour of their new dental clinic two weeks ago. While I have driven by the clinic (on 400 South, opposite Pioneer Park) hundreds of times, I never expected to see what I saw inside. It is a state-of-the-art, patient-centered health care center for Utah's homeless population. The Fourth Street Clinic serves 4,200 homeless men, women and children each year with 25,000 medical, mental health, substance abuse, dental, and case management visits.

Upon stepping through the doors, I saw that the remodeled facility is truly as good as many private medical facilities. The clinic manages the various levels of intense medical, dental and

mental health care that Utah's homeless individuals and families need. The hard-working clinic staff also connect this homeless population to the various social resources (housing, employment, etc.) that can help with their recovery and rehabilitation. Fourth Street Clinic truly is their "love" and their "positive," as Jamie, a client, put it.

All of this was built on grants and donated resources. It was mind-boggling to learn that through coordination of the many grants, private and corporate donations, Fourth Street Clinic was able to provide cataract operations that would have cost \$33,626 in the private market for only \$1,200. As I walked through the clinic hearing a few of the administrative team's accomplishments, it slowly dawned on me how incredibly blessed I am to live in a society that can enable such levels of care and rehabilitation for the poorest among us. Yes, we have many other challenges in Utah — from clean air to education funding to adequate health care. But my experience at the Fourth Street Clinic has made me realize that they are winnable causes, because Utahns are truly giving, and I am proud to be one of them.

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