

Perspectives

Mary's Center for Maternal & Child Care Saving lives and creating stronger communities — one family at a time

FALL 2009



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Established in 1988
A Federally Qualified
Health Center
since 2005

National Council of
La Raza Affiliate
United Way affiliate
since 1999

NCLR
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LA RAZA



United Way #8263
CFC #66350

From the President & CEO

With the health care reform on the forefront, I have been reminded of many individuals and families whose stories speak so strongly to this issue. One in particular that stands out for me is about a 12 year-old boy whose family endured a costly and unnecessary hardship. One day, the boy saw a private doctor while in excruciating pain, and his family paid out of pocket for the visit. Unfortunately they were unable to afford the prescribed medication or x-rays. Afraid of what the doctor would say for not seeking the treatment, the follow-up visit never occurred. The symptoms, of course, would get worse, and he eventually returned to an emergency room where he had a ruptured appendix. The hospitalization put the family in debt because they were "over income" by a couple hundred dollars per year to qualify for Medicaid. The only remaining choice was for the parents to reduce their working hours to make them eligible for medical assistance — not a choice that most hard-working families ever imagine making.

When the child went back to his doctor for a post-surgery check-up, the doctor was reluctant to see him without a follow-up hospital note. A connectivity of medical records between the hospital and the doctor would have saved the physician time and money, and would have enabled the child to receive timely, and most importantly, quality care. Instead,

the family was asked to go back to the hospital to retrieve the records in order for him to be seen.

The mother eventually lost her job due to the many absences she took to care for her son. Most heartbreaking is the fact that this child missed weeks of school. This was time that he could not afford to lose with the challenges he was already experiencing in his Math and English courses. Personally, I don't have to wonder why we often see angry and resentful young people walking our streets.

A seemingly innocuous occurrence — a brief delay in a child's diagnosis — swelled into an avoidable complicated surgery and a long recovery due to a post-surgical infection. Sadly, this is the typical "health care" that most of our uninsured individuals presently receive. What may surprise you the most is that this family I am describing are not clients of Mary's Center. Rather, they are a middle-class family with two parents who are working to contribute to society and build a better future for their children; a family that looks much like many of our employees at Mary's Center.

As health insurance premiums have doubled in the last decade, we have had to shift a greater amount of the cost to our employees to insure the greatest coverage. This cost shifting has rendered 33% of our total employees who did not select a plan

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Mary's Center: H1N1 Vaccination Site for the District

In order to support the DC Department of Health in its efforts to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus, Mary's Center has registered as one of the District's vaccination sites for the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine.

Also, to prepare for the influenza season, Mary's Center hosted two vaccination drives for the staff in September and will start providing the H1N1 vaccines to patients for free in October, when the vaccines are expected to arrive.

Within the past year, Mary's Center has provided close to 19,500 immunizations of all types to our participants, including 3,500 flu vaccines and nearly 1,500 vaccines for pregnant women.

"We are committed to fighting the H1N1 virus and to providing as many vaccines as we can to District residents in a timely and effective matter in order to guarantee that the nation's capitol is on the front lines of preventing the virus" said Mary's Center Vice President of Medicine, Dr. Mark Fracasso.



Press conference held by DC Mayor Adrian Fenty and the Director of the DC Department of Health, Dr. Pierre Vigilance, at Mary's Center on September 4th.

President's Message *continued*

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Our Mission

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care builds better futures through the delivery of health care, education and social services. We embrace culturally diverse communities to provide them with the highest quality of care, regardless of their ability to pay.

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ineligible simply because they are unable to afford their premium share. Most of these individuals are the heart and soul of Mary's Center, and yet every year they have to choose between health insurance and paying their mortgage. They are the first ones to come and the last ones to leave the Center; they keep our work area clean and safe, and are the first and last smiling face that you see when you visit. Their absence for one day hampers our organizational effectiveness. We are looking for a more viable insurance plan, but unfortunately the odds are against us. After covering personnel salaries, health insurance is our biggest expense.

Someone you know has experienced a similar story to the one I described, and yet all of us have chosen the path of least resistance — to let

the status quo continue. This fall, let us listen to the stories and how they speak to our hearts. We all know that our nation is as strong as our most vulnerable child, so let us be heard, listen very carefully to the options, participate, and stand ready to modify a broken system.

My deepest gratitude goes out to you for your time, support, and dedication to our hard-working families who, right now, are our most unprotected.

Warmly,



Maria S. Gomez, R.N., M.P.H.
President & CEO

Mary's Center Will Have a New Home in Ward 4

Mary's Center is expanding once more! This is good news, especially for those medically-underserved individuals who live in Ward 4 of the District. The new building, located at 3910 Georgia Avenue, NW, a block north of the Georgia Avenue-Petworth metro station, will replace the existing site in Ward 4 that opened in 2005. With a much greater capacity, this new facility will allow us to expand our services, including much-needed dental care.

"Mary's Center will have a new home in this neighborhood to continue doing their fantastic work in meeting critical needs such as HIV testing, teen pregnancy issues, and providing comprehensive health care," said DC Mayor Adrian Fenty in May when he attended the demolition of the old structure on Georgia Avenue.

The overall project will include 130 mixed-income apartments in the floors above the center as part of a joint venture between Jair Lynch Companies and the Affordable Housing Developers.

"We are very excited about this new building," said Maria Gomez, President and CEO of Mary's Center. "It will give us a more efficient space in which to serve our patients and will enable us to increase our primary health care capacity in this underserved area."

A \$7.5 million grant from the DC Primary Care Association (DCPCA) is supporting the initial construction. The total development cost of Mary's Center's portion of the project is estimated to be between \$15 and \$16 million.

The new building is expected to be complete by the end of 2010.



Mary's Center's new site will occupy 28,000 square feet on the first floor of this 140,000 square foot residential building.

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About Perspectives

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Perspectives is Mary's Center's newsletter showcasing the daily work of the Center, the positive outcomes it achieves, and the valuable support given by its donors and the community at large. Working together, Mary's Center is able to achieve its goals and make a difference in the lives of those being served.

Circulation: 6,500 copies distributed

Mary's Center's in Maryland Celebrates its First Anniversary

It has been a wonderful and productive year at Mary's Center's first site in Maryland. In just one year of operation, the Center has provided 2,514 participants with a full range of health care, social services, and educational programs.

"We are thrilled to see Mary's Center thriving in Montgomery County," says Maria Gomez, president and CEO. "The rapid increase of participants in such short period of time confirms the need of a place like Mary's Center in that area and reiterates the work that still needs to be done to fulfill the needs of thousands of residents."

On July 9th, government officials gathered with local legislators, community leaders, Mary's Center's partners, staff and friends to celebrate the one-year anniversary of this site, located on 8709 Flower Avenue in the Long Branch area of Silver Spring. Mary's Center has two more sites in the District of Columbia.

The center offers services to residents of Montgomery and Prince George's counties, regardless of their ability to pay.



President and CEO Maria Gomez gave an energetic speech to the attendees about the importance of the work done by Mary's Center in Montgomery County during its first year of operations.

Two Years in Limbo — Until They Found Mary's Center

Zenir and her husband, Thawan, aren't sure what they would have done if it hadn't been for Mary's Center in Silver Spring, Maryland.

In 2001, Thawan Phongsuwan, a native from Thailand and US citizen, suffered a heart attack. In 2005, he had a second heart attack and open-heart surgery. Even though his health was suffering, he continued working until 2007, when his condition forced him to stop working as a hotel chef.

By losing his job, he also lost his health insurance. As a result, during the following two years Thawan could not continue his follow-up appointments with the cardiologist, nor could he afford his medication.



After two heart attacks and open heart surgery, Thawan Phongsuwan, pictured right, lost his job and health insurance. Mary's Center helped him and his wife Zenir to receive medical and social services again.

"It was the first time since 1969 when I arrived from Thailand and my wife arrived from Brazil that we didn't have health insurance," Thawan said. "It was also the worst time because I needed my insurance more than ever before."

Thawan applied for disability from the Social Security office, but it was not accepted. The amount that he received from that office was not enough to cover their bills or to pay for health insurance.

"We were resigned to the fact that if either of us got sick again, we would expect nothing but the worst because we couldn't afford one more emergency room bill," said Zenir.

A few months after Mary's Center opened its doors in Montgomery County, Zenir heard about the Center from a friend.

"Our lives changed," Thawan said. "Mary's Center did all we needed. I now see a cardiologist and we both get our annual exams and regular check-ups here."

Zenir can't be happier. "I like everything about Mary's Center and I am so grateful for having found this place at a moment when we needed it so much. I just hope this clinic remains open forever."

Just like Zenir and Thawan, more than 2,500 residents from Montgomery County and Prince Georges County are coming to Mary's Center for crucial services. Women are seeking prenatal care in early or late stages of their pregnancies; children are coming in need of their immunizations; and individuals are looking for basic health care needs or guidance in urgent issues related to domestic violence, school enrollment, or mental health. They all share their feelings of relief for having Mary's Center and for receiving services that they lacked for years.

Stimulus Money

Stimulus Money Restores Dental Services

When Congress and President Obama approved the stimulus plan a few months ago to boost the ailing economy, it wasn't immediately obvious how the money would help organizations like Mary's Center.

Today, that stimulus money is literally putting new smiles on the faces of Mary's Center's patients! That's because the first of the federal monies is being used to bring back Mary's Center's vitally important dental services, which had to be closed last year due to a lack of funding. Mary's Center's mobile clinic, the Mama & Baby Bus, is equipped with a dental chair and a new X-ray machine, making it easier for patients to get their films done in-house. So far, the mobile bus is available four days a week in DC for all members of our families.

"Pregnant women who have no dental care are at a higher risk of giving birth prematurely," explains Dr. Oluwole Ajagbe, Mary's Center's dentist. "They can also suffer more serious complications if oral infections are not detected and treated properly."

Over the next two years, Mary's Center will receive more than \$300,000 from the stimulus program for dental services. A total of \$1.7 million has been allocated to health clinics in the District to serve the growing number of individuals who need health care but have no insurance or cannot afford it.

Mary's Center plans to add three more dental chairs to its new



Dr. Oluwole Ajagbe, Mary's Center's new dentist, enjoys providing important dental services to our participants.

More Projects from the Stimulus Program

In late June, Mary's Center was awarded \$795,650 from the second round of stimulus funding under the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This funds will help us renovate the Ontario clinic in Adams Morgan. Since its last renovation in 1994, Mary's Center has experienced tremendous growth, and the facility has not kept pace with the ever-growing number of participants served. Mary's Center believes that these improvements will enhance our participants' experiences, allow our staff to work more efficiently, and ultimately support better patient outcomes. We expect to begin construction within the next few weeks and finish renovations by June 2011.

Your Support Helps Us Achieve Our Goals

Mary's Center relies on the support and generosity of foundations, corporations, and individuals who believe in our mission of building better futures through the delivery of high-quality health care, education and social services. An investment in Mary's Center is an investment in the well-being of the entire community, and we thank the following grant makers for their generous support over the last six months:

- **Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy:** \$50,000 for the Even Start Family Literacy Program
- **Cisco Systems, Inc.:** \$54,740 in donated IT equipment
- **Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative Pro-Urban Youth Program:** \$58,370 for the summer Urbanito program
- **DC CYITC Parent Center:** \$25,000 for Family Social Services
- **DC CYITC Out of School Time:** \$25,500 for the Teen Program
- **DC Primary Care Association:** \$98,364 to improve IT infrastructure
- **Fight for Children:** \$20,000 for general support
- **Montgomery County Community Foundation Neighbors in Need Montgomery Fund:** \$25,000 to support a Connector position at the Maryland site
- **Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation:** \$30,000 for general operations of the Maryland clinic
- **Philip L. Graham Fund:** \$40,000 to purchase equipment and make repairs to the clinic
- **The Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation:** \$40,000 for general operations
- **The Moriah Fund:** \$20,000 for the Teen Program
- **The Rapoport Family Foundation:** \$20,000 for the Teen Program
- **The Trustees Philanthropy Fund of the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund:** \$60,000 to assist in the development of Mary's Center strategic plan and increase the Center's online presence
- **The World Bank:** \$100,000 matching funds to improve IT infrastructure
- **Washington AIDS Partnership:** \$40,000 to support HIV/AIDS testing, counseling, and referral to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among District residents of African ancestry

Supporting the Health Care Reform



Juliana Morris joined the group of volunteers from *Organizing for America* to educate individuals on the different options of the health care reform.

During the month of September, Mary's Center hosted a group of *DC Organizing for America* volunteers from Wards 1 and 2 for a phone-a-thon to inform local residents about the health care reform options.

Each Tuesday afternoon from 6 pm to 9 pm, the volunteers met at Mary's Center, making a total of nearly 400 phone calls to individuals around the country. Many critical and educational conversations were held on health care reform and the coordinators reported that the initiative was a great success.

We Need Your Support to Promote Fatherhood



On August 27th, participants of the Father/Child Program had a Fatherhood Cook Out at Rock Creek Park to celebrate the completion of their support group. Participants arrived with their families to celebrate and receive certificates of completion.

As part of our continuous goal to promote stable families, Mary's Center started the Father/Child program in January 2009, sponsored by the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA). The purpose of this program is to encourage and support fathers' involvement in our community, prevent child abuse/neglect, and foster positive parenting skills and successful parent-child interaction.

Through this program, Mary's Center intends to prevent consequences that often result from a father's absence in childhood, such as gang involvement, substance abuse, and depression.

In less than a year, the program has made positive impressions in the community and Mary's Center has been asked to implement the support groups at two schools, in addition to expanding to other locations. However, we received less funding this year to continue the project and are concerned about its future. If you are interested in supporting our families through this program, we invite you to contact the coordinator of the project, Bernadete Aldrich, at 202-420-7105 or by email at baldrich@maryscenter.org.

Thanks in advance for helping us sustain this important supportive program for the well-being of our families.

Where are we going in the next three years? The Strategic Plan is in process

Mary's Center is making progress with its strategic planning process for 2010-2013. To help make it happen, Mary's Center hired Karen Pell and Joseph Chadwick of VIA Consulting LLC to work on the process with a committee of 15 members of the board



and staff. The consultants are working with these individuals and other key informants to identify the important strategies and goals that will guide us in developing the most appropriate plan for the future of Mary's Center.

Two retreats and several other meetings and interviews have taken place at Mary's Center since April 2009 when the strategic planning process was launched. From now until November the team will work on framing and finalizing the plan for Board approval.

"One of the most valuable tools of the Mary's Center's strategic planning process is the participatory process facilitated by the Strategic Planning Committee. Each Mary's Center staff member is encouraged to provide feedback and to bring ideas and suggestions to the members of the Committee," says Karen Pell, one of the strategic planning consultants.

The new strategic plan will be approved in November and put into action in January 2010.

New COO Joins Mary's Center's Team



Mary's Center is pleased to announce the new Chief Operating Officer. David P. Tatro, Sr., a successful health care executive, joined the Mary's Center family in July. Mr. Tatro brings over 20 years of administrative experience in the health care field to his role as COO. A graduate of the University of Massachusetts, Mr. Tatro holds an MBA from Rivier College in Nashua, New Hampshire.

His employer for the past three years, National Counseling Group, Inc. of Manassas, Virginia, is a provider of outpatient services.

Mr. Tatro's responsibilities include ensuring proper operational controls, procedures, personnel and systems to facilitate continued growth and compliance with all regulatory agencies. In addition, he oversees the Center's day-to-day operating activities, including revenue from patient care billing, program expenses, cost and margin control, and monthly, quarterly and annual reports to designated sources.

Mary's Center is delighted to welcome Mr. Tatro aboard. We all know how vital role he plays as Chief Operating Officer, helping to guide our financial future.

Noche Tropical



Our Annual gala, Noche Tropical, is just around the corner!

On October 8th, we will spend an evening at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel with some of our strongest supporters and notable Washingtonians for a fantastic celebration of our work in the community. Together we will truly enjoy "Celebrating our Legacy... Saving Lives and Creating Stronger Communities, One Family at a Time."

Mary's Center would like to recognize the following organizations for their dedication to the mission and work of Mary's Center and their support of this year's event:*

Community Builder Level

Clark Construction Group LLC/Clark Charitable Foundation
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The M&T Charitable Foundation
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