



# PERSPECTIVES



FALL 2005

Staff Writer: Lyda Vanegas

## From the President & CEO

When DC Council holds its appropriations hearings this fall, Mary's Center will testify on issues that affect the community we serve. The effectiveness demonstrated by our current programs and the need for additional services necessitates maintaining current funding at the very least.

As we begin the 2007 budget process, we feel compelled to testify on issues of health, social services and education. We also need to demonstrate how our programs have changed behaviors in the community and have made it a healthier and safer place for all of us.

To this end, Mary's Center is adding a new advocacy position to our organization. This will enable us to focus on the programs that support our work - health care, early childhood education, and support in the home - and report on them with intelligent and powerful documentation.

Medicaid is one of the supporting programs in jeopardy, given the current federal climate. It is the lifeline for 45% of our children who depend on this insurance for medical care.

We also have concerns about the DC Healthcare Alliance, which is supported by DC-appropriated funds. It assists primarily non-childbearing women, and immigrants who don't qualify for Medicaid. This is a tremendously cost-effective program. We need to guarantee that there is enough documentation during the Council hearings to support its importance to Mary's Center and to the community.

In addition, we clearly understand the significance of giving a child an early education. We also understand that parents need support and knowledge to raise healthy children. Our Home Visitation programs provide outreach throughout the community to women in early pregnancy and follow them through the child's second, or fifth year. It connects families to primary care, makes sure that children are healthy and safe, and gives parents the skills to be the best teachers for their children. The program also connects families to community and social services and to employment resources, so that parents are also being supported.



*Children have the right to look at the mirror with confidence. Mary's Center advocates to make it happen.*

This program has given us excellent results in early learning and school readiness as well as drop-out prevention. The number of children entering college has increased and their return to the community is the best example to others.

We have evidence at Mary's Center that those children whose parents lived a traumatic life during pregnancy began their early education already handicapped. They are more likely the children involved in gangs and related issues.

We have the mechanism in place for prevention, for education and for outreach. Now, we need the mechanism for advocacy to collect, document and promote the outstanding results of our programs.

If we are to sustain the progress of Mary's Center in the long term, we must document and verbalize the tremendous positive effect that our programs have on the well-being of this community and the economic prosperity of the nation's capital.

Warmly,

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

## Our Clients

### *Inspiring Biographies*

Through the stories narrated in this segment of Perspectives, about some of our most inspiring clients, you will see how your support goes a long way. Your efforts have a tremendous and positive effect on the lives of others.

#### **Marina**

Marina gets up at 3:45 a.m. every day to go to work. She has a part time job at a cafeteria in Maryland.

Since the walk-in refrigerators were installed in the cafeteria, Marina's knees started weakening and feeling pain, but she had been

reluctant to visit doctors and hospitals after she received the last bill for \$3,000 from the emergency room she visited previously.

Marina has never had health insurance, since her arrival from Guatemala in 1964.

For security reasons, her father sent her to live in the US and

since then, she has had to pay out-of-pocket for her doctor's visits. She couldn't afford private insurance and she didn't know that she could be eligible for any health coverage just until three months ago when she came to Mary's Center's new site in Ward 4.

"I am so happy because now I can visit a doctor without the stress of the bill," says Marina.

Since Marina applied for DC Healthcare Alliance, the free health insurance provided by the District to low-income DC residents, she started visiting Mary's Center's for her appointments and to get referrals to the

specialists who've been taking care of her bone problems and arthritis.

"I had decided not to visit a doctor any more unless it was a critical medical situation. I am still paying off the loan that the bank gave me to cover my old ER bill, and I feel so blessed to have found Mary's Center and receive their support," says Marina.

These encouraging words are one of the many reasons to be confident in our work and our intention to expand our services as a way to reach more people in need of health services in Washington, D.C. area.



*Inmar Mondragon, Teen Program participant nominated for the IDB-DC Youth Award*

*"I am so happy because now I can visit a doctor without the stress of the bill... I feel so blessed to have found Mary's Center and receive their support"*

The IDB-DC Youth award recognizes the contributions of young people to the Washington, D.C. Latino and Caribbean community, people who make positive differences in the lives of others by responding to community needs.

#### **Congratulations to Teen Program Participant**

The Inter-American Development Bank recently presented the IDB-DC Youth Award, and we were proud to see Inmar Mondragon, Mary's Center's Teen Program participant, among the nominees.

"Inmar is a leader and someone his peers look to for respect and support; I know that whatever he does in the future, he will be working to make our community better," said Teen Program Director Beth Perry.

Even though the award wasn't granted to Inmar, being nominated was a positive experience for him.

"To be part of such an important ceremony and share my experience with other youths, made me think that I can reach more goals than I thought I could," said 19-year-old Inmar.

We want to express our joy and congratulations to Inmar, and take the opportunity to thank the Inter-American Development Bank for its continued support for Mary's Center.

## Our Staff

### *What Makes Mary's Center Staff So Unique*



*Mary's Center staff retreat*

Looking at this photograph taken at a staff retreat in April 2005, it's hard to believe how much Mary's Center has grown with the years. To give an example, in just the six months since this picture was taken we have added more than 40 new staff members. Our number is now close to 160 employees, and the amount keeps increasing at an amazing rate.

"Seven years ago I knew every single name and title of my co-workers, and I had the chance to interact regularly with everyone; today I see new faces almost every day in positions and from locations that didn't exist before. It is exciting to see where we are and to know where we are going," says Joan Yengo, Vice President for Programs.

It is exciting indeed. We have grown, especially in the last five years, and the following numbers will give the best idea:

In 1988 10 people worked at Mary's Center.

By 2000 our staff had grown to almost 70. Very reasonable for a non-profit in 12 years, right?

Well, today just five years later, we have doubled and nearly tripled that number to almost 160.

And while the number of staff members at Mary's Center has grown in an unbelievable way, the number of families we serve has grown even more rapidly. We jumped up from 3,000 clients served in 2000 to almost 10,000 in the past year, an increase of more than 300%.

Did we really think it was going to be this way?

"No. When we opened in 1988 we didn't think of the dimensions the center will take. I haven't had time to sit down and look back

because the needs don't stop and our work increases with them," says Maria Gomez, President and CEO and also founder and leader of this project.

It has been a great challenge for all of us as staff members to enable and work for Mary's Center's growth, and a privilege to be able to support the needy community that brings the purpose to our organization. We have grown because as President Gomez says, the needs of the community have grown as well, and we all are encouraged to work harder every day to help their dreams come true despite the current complexity of our political, social and economic situation.

Our days of a small number of co-workers working under the same ceiling, sharing the tiny old kitchen and thinking that our conference room was enough for all of us are gone. Don't be surprised if by the time you receive this Perspectives, the number of Mary's Center staff members will approach 200.

### **President and CEO, Maria Gomez, newspaper columnist**



*Look for this photograph of Mary's Center President and CEO, Maria Gomez, to read an interesting health-related column every week in the Washington Hispanic health supplement Salud Guia.*

Due to the recognition and acceptance she enjoys in the community, and her wide experience in issues relating to health, Mary's Center's President and CEO Maria Gomez, has been invited to be the columnist for the Washington Hispanic's new health supplement, *Salud Guia*.

Every Friday, Ms. Gomez addresses a new health topic that affects directly our community, and provides excellent advice to the readers.

"It has been a wonderful experience for me to write these columns because I feel that I am closer to the community I've been serving for so many years," says Maria Gomez.

*Salud Guia* supplement comes with the Washington Hispanic newspaper every Friday. Its distribution is free.

## Our Programs

### *Mary's Center's Playgroup Gaining Popularity*

**A**driana Matos, a native Argentinean, is Alex and Olivia's babysitter. Every day she has a different routine to entertain the two-year old twins, and Friday is a special day for them. Around 9:30 a.m. Adriana says the magic words: "Mary's Center", and the kids jump in the stroller, say good bye to mommy without crying, and get anxious for Adriana to head out. It's playgroup day.



*Adriana Matos with Olivia and Alex at their weekly encounter with Mary's Center's playgroup*

The walk from Woodley Park is about 20 minutes to Mary's Center's Conference Room, where more than 20 children are waiting for an exciting morning.

It is an hour-and-a-half activity where children, parents and babysitters learn while they play, discover new toys, sing along, and talk to each other.

"The playgroup is basically an activity to develop children's brains," says Zulma Aparicio, the Playgroup Coordinator and Mary's Center Early Intervention Specialist.

Initially, the Early Intervention Program at Mary's Center started the playgroup as an activity for its clients —children from 0 to three years old with any developmental delay— and their parents, with the purpose of providing tools to help with their development through games and interaction with other children.

With the years, the playgroup has expanded to the neighborhood and now to the surrounding areas. Some of the mothers bringing their kids to the playgroup are Mary's Center patients and Early Intervention Program participants. They started spreading the word among their friends, many of them working as babysitters in the neighborhood, and then those babysitters told their friends living

further out and little by little, the playgroup became so popular and diverse that the group opened its doors to any child up to five years old who wanted to attend.

Since Alex and Olivia were nine months old, Adriana has been attending the playgroup, and she can tell how positive this experience has been for the twins.

"Olivia used to be very shy and didn't like to relate with any child unless they were her own brother or sister, but with the playgroup Olivia has learned to be friendlier. She participates in the activities and they both have shown an amazing improvement," said Adriana.

As the number of families participating keeps growing, the playgroup has been an excellent setting for Mary's Center to guide the parents on the stages of the child, and a great way to assess their progress.

"Even though most of our playgroup participants are very healthy, the playgroup has been a wonderful opportunity for us to detect developmental deficiencies that sometimes the parents are not aware of. We give them the instruments to work on those fields where the child needs more intervention, and we refer them to specific programs if needed," says Sara Rodriguez-Story, Early Intervention Coordinator.

Alex and Olivia, as well as all of the children attending Mary's Center playgroup, learn something new every week, and it has been a pleasant experience for the Center to hold a program that works so hard on children's development.



*Books are an excellent stimulus for children's brain development. Playgroup coordinator, Zulma Aparicio, reads books in English and Spanish and interacts with the children about their content.*

## Program News In Brief

### Open Access

In order to meet the needs of our patients, and to make it easier for them to obtain appointments in a shorter period of time, Mary's Center has implemented a new system called Open Access.

"This new appointment system will allow our patients to be seen on the same day they call for an appointment. We will still schedule appointments up to two weeks in advance," explains Dr. Candace Mitchell, Vice President for Medical Affairs.

Open Access will eliminate long waits for appointments, especially for physical exams, and better yet, will decrease the number of no-show patients that reduce the opportunity for others to be seen.

With Open Access, Mary's Center moves forward to optimize the services and the satisfaction of our clients.

### New Partnership

#### *Mary's Center & Ayuda*

Mary's Center is proud to announce a new partnership with one of the District's most highly-regarded and earliest-established Latino community-based organizations. In October, Ayuda became a tenant of Mary's Center, moving to the second floor of our building at 1707 Kalorama Road, N.W.

Incorporated in 1973, Ayuda exists to advocate for and defend the legal and human rights of low-income Latino and other immigrant communities in the Washington, D.C. area. Ayuda promotes social justice and client empowerment through high-quality program activities related to immigration and domestic violence, including legal and social services,

assistance to survivors and victims of domestic violence, advocacy, and community education. Ayuda's work complements the mission of Mary's Center by seeking to build community and promote the availability of comprehensive services for immigrant families.

### Program Graduation



*Many of these graduates already have their own day care center thanks to the Day Care Licensing classes held at Mary's Center.*

On September 23, Mary's Center held a meaningful graduation ceremony for 182 Child Care Licensing Program participants.

Each graduate had completed a 120-hour program and received a Diploma in Early Childhood Education which will allow them to work as daycare or school teachers of children up to six years old.

The ceremony was a multicultural encounter with students from more than 30 different countries that found in Mary's Center the opportunity to be trained in their own languages, receive the tools, and obtain the licenses to allow them to work in preschool settings and even open their own daycare centers.

### Important Study on DC Latino Health

The District's Latino Health Care Collaborative, led by the Council of Latino Agencies, has recently released a groundbreaking comprehensive report, *The State of Latino Health in the District of Columbia*.

The study reveals low rates of health insurance and access to care; high rates of diabetes, cancer and obesity; and many other statistics that provide an accurate picture of the need for organizations like Mary's Center.

Unlike past studies conducted by various groups, this research was conducted door-to-door in Spanish, by data collectors who are members of the community. This has ensured that for the first time we have findings that are truly representative of the District's diverse Latino population.

Dr. Rosemarie Rollins-Folks, an internist at Mary's Center, noted, "This study can really help health care providers and organizations to know where we need to concentrate our outreach, and that we need to increase testing and educating our patients on health issues such as diabetes."

This study will also be used by government agencies, researchers, and funders to focus their efforts on the programs and services that are most needed by the Latino community.

Mary's Center staff members, including Vivian Cativo, Maria Gomez, and Sonia Umazor are proud to have made important contributions to this work. A copy of the study can be requested through the Council of Latino Agencies website at [www.consejo.org](http://www.consejo.org)

## Join the Team of Volunteers at Mary's Center

*Help Us Help Parents, Teenagers and Children!*

Do you have the time and commitment to work in conjunction with Mary's Center staff develop projects that will improve the health and well being of our community? If so, the volunteer possibilities are endless... call our Center Services Coordinator Sonia Umanzor at 202-420-7001

## Ten Ways You Can Help Mary's Center This Year!

*As suggested by our banker,  
David Hutchinson of M&T Bank*

### 1. Make a gift of cash

*As always, easy to do and an immediate income tax charitable deduction.*

### 2. Matching gifts

*If your employer matches charitable gifts, this is an easy way to increase the amount of your contribution. Ask at your HR office if your gift to Mary's Center can be matched.*

### 3. Deduct now, Pay later

*By using your credit card to make a gift, you can take the deduction now and pay off the balance on the credit card over time. Some credit cards even allow frequent flyer miles on card balances. You can give to Mary's Center securely online at <http://www.maryscenter.org/how2help.htm>, or use the envelope enclosed in this newsletter. Caveat emptor: Watch out for finance charges.*

### 4. Donate stock that has appreciated

*Use long-term stock and avoid the capital gains. But, be mindful of limitations when donating stock.*

### 5. Sell stock that has decreased in value

*Sell the stock, take the capital loss on your tax return and donate the proceeds. For more information on how to donate stock to Mary's Center, call David Bender at 202-483-8319 x341.*

### 6. Donating a life insurance policy

*Consider donating a life insurance policy you no longer find useful and receive a charitable deduction for the cash value of the policy. Talk with your tax advisor or insurance company for more information.*

### 7. Establish a Philanthropic Fund

*Consider setting up a charitable fund (and taking the deduction now) to give you some flexibility as to the timing and determination of eventual recipients of the fund. The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region has many options to help you do this - visit their web site at [www.cfncr.org](http://www.cfncr.org).*

### 8. Establish a Charitable Gift Annuity

*In return for a gift of property, Mary's Center may agree to pay an annuity to you, or another beneficiary, a set dollar amount every year for the rest of your life, or for a term of years. This type of transaction is in part the purchase of an annuity, and in part a charitable contribution.*

### 9. Charitable Remainder Trust

*For gifts of \$100,000 or more, consider establishing a charitable remainder trust designating yourself or another beneficiary to receive income for life or a term of years with trust principal passing to Mary's Center when it terminates. You can receive a charitable deduction when the trust is created for the value of the charitable remainder interest. M&T Bank can help you and Mary's Center to make annuity or trust arrangements.*

### 10. Know Your Charity

*Be sure that the organizations that you contribute to are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service and meet standards for accountability and transparency. A good place to start is at [GuideStar.org](http://www.guidestar.org). Mary's Center's GuideStar profile is linked at <http://www.maryscenter.org/how2help.htm>.*

**NOTE:** This guide is intended to only provide general information. You should always seek the advice of your attorney and accountant before engaging in a charitable giving program.

# Save the Date for Noche Tropical



**M**ark your calendars because one of the most outstanding galas in town is coming. Noche Tropical, Mary's Center fall gala, will be on November 12 at the Homer Building at Metro Center. Join us to celebrate what we have done this year thanks to your support. Give yourself a wonderful evening out with the satisfaction of knowing that your money is making a difference and is helping thousands of families to have a better future.

Noche Tropical features the famous band Orquesta La Romana and DJ Azucar who will make you want to dance all night, plus the extraordinary performance of the

Quetzales Mexican Dance Ensemble with the best of Mexican folklore. Ah! and not to mention the exquisite menu of Latino and international tapas accompanied by sangrias and margaritas, and our traditional auction with more than 150 items to bid on. This year we are adding two exciting dimensions to our event: a live auction and an on-line auction that you can now visit and bid at [www.maryscenter.cmarket.com](http://www.maryscenter.cmarket.com).

Noche Tropical is an event not to be missed, and the proceeds will go to support Mary's Center programs. For more information, please call Priscilla Vasquez at 202-420-7052.



*Noche Tropical 2004. The music and dancing didn't stop.*

## Donation Center

*In-kind donations are always welcome at Mary's Center and they are tax-deductible. If you have something that may be useful to the Center, please contact Priscilla Vasquez at (202) 420-7052.*

**The following are especially needed:**

- Educational games, workbooks and teaching supplies for the Homework Clinic
- Cribs
- Baby high chairs
- Microwave
- HP photo printer
- LCD Projector
- Children's books (English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Hindi, French)
- Books and magazines for adolescents
- Toys, coloring books and crayons for our playgroups
- Sippy cups, diapers, baby toys and clothes for children
- Strollers in good condition for patients.
- New thermometers to give out to parents
- Office Supplies
- Round tables for meeting rooms
- Fireproof safe
- Color printer
- Small TV set and VCR for the Mama and Baby Bus
- Dental equipment
- Computers: Pentium 4,256 ram, 20 GB hard drive, NIC
- Gifts for our Educational Baby Showers: new clothes, toys, blankets, etc.
- Scanners
- Children's computer games
- Brochure racks and book shelves
- Blank tablets of newsprint and colored paper
- Lawn furniture for pond area

## Our Mission

*The mission of Mary's Center is to build better futures through the delivery of health care, education and social services. We embrace our culturally diverse community and provide the highest quality care regardless of ability to pay.*

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