



PERSPECTIVES



SUMMER 2005

Staff Writer: Lyda Vanegas

From the President/CEO

There is a great potential for many of our families to continue being displaced from their homes; released from their job because of security issues, and abused by their employers as a result of reactionary immigration policies. Fear of these causes medical-related troubles that are the result of societal tensions and traumas than physical circumstances.

Mary's Center is responding to these needs by strengthening our infrastructure and advocacy role in order to prevent and/or ameliorate some of the most pressing issues affecting the well-being of our community.



Cutting the ribbon, from left to right: Eluvia Sanchez (Board Member), Elizabeth Griffith (Vice Chair of the Board), Maria Gomez (Mary's Center President and CEO), Linda Cropp (Chairman of the DC Council), Ron Joiner (Vice President of Marketing from Chartered Health Plan), along with Mary's Center's staff and neighbors.

To further address this need, we are expanding into Ward 4 with a new center. We are thrilled about this growth, but we are also a bit apprehensive because we will be the only community health center in a Ward with a large diverse and underinsured working class community.

We are preparing to start small, but our vision is to eventually expand our services to fulfill the needs of our community in partnership with our two neighbors: the Barney Senior Center and the Children's Hut Day Care Center. Our collective services will be comprehensive and intergenerational.

Our intention is to work towards purchasing our rented building in Ward 4 so that we can expand our health care, social service, and educational programs in this area and augment our partnerships with our neighbors.

We are hoping that with the opening of our new Ward 4 Center, Mayor Anthony Williams will continue to invest in the DC Medical Homes project so that all citizens in the District of Columbia can have access to state-of-the-art health services in their own neighborhood.

In the future, we also hope to begin working with the wellness centers that the Mayor is planning to create in DC. We would embrace the opportunity to work with the DC Primary Care Association Medical Homes project in developing new health practices and creating improved health outcomes for all.

I want to share my enthusiasm with you regarding Mary's Center's new endeavors and I invite you to join us in working towards a better future for a community in need.

Warmly,

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



Ward 4 Council Member, Adrian Fenty, also joined us at the Grand Opening and spoke to the audience about the impact that Mary's Center's new site will bring to the community.

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.

Please note that, when needed, clients' names and countries of origin have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

Carmen

Carmen is one of our Teen Program participants, and recently graduated from our Peer Educators Program. She first came to Mary's Center in November 2003.

When Carmen was six months old, her mother left her and her two other sisters in care of their aunt in Mexico. Over the next 13 years, Carmen saw her mother only twice. Then, in 2003, Carmen's mother brought Carmen and one of her sisters to live with her in Washington, DC, where most of Carmen's family lives.

"It was like living with a stranger," said Carmen about her first days with her mother. The life that she had idealized with her mother turned out to be far from reality. The transition was very difficult for her and her sister and, as a consequence, Carmen's sister ran away from home a few months later, when she turned 19. Carmen had to struggle with fights, psychological damage and domestic violence. The situation ended up with Carmen being taken away from her mother and put under foster care.

"The concern is that parents want their children to understand the sacrifices they made for them, and the children only see desertion and question their love. Consequently, stress, anger, depression and resentment manifest themselves in both parties and overcoming that is often difficult if not an impossible endeavor," says Meg Backas, Director of Mary's Center's Mental Health Program.

When Carmen came to Mary's Center, Laura Niño was assigned to be Carmen's Family Support Worker. Laura started a rough battle to provide Carmen with the strength she needed to leave the fears and uncertainties behind, and give her back her confidence and self-esteem to face this new life, so different from how she had lived in her country of origin.

For the past nine months, Laura was Carmen's advocate at court, and the link between Carmen and the Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA) and the Foster Care agency. Laura was also Carmen's interpreter and worked arduously to humanize Carmen's case and make organizations and persons involved in her case understand Carmen's needs and feelings, and to look after her stability to try to minimize her trauma.

A great achievement for Laura was to get Mary's Center as the appointed agency to provide Carmen with most of the services that she needed instead of having her visiting many other places that weren't having a good effect on her.

Carmen received health care at Mary's Center along with counseling from our Mental Health program, and participated at different projects of the Teen Program.

"The change that Carmen presented was almost instantaneous. She came every week with a different face and with a much more empowered attitude," says Laura.

"It was very important to me to come to Mary's Center and to have a person to talk to. I also learned so many things that I know will be helpful for my future."

"It was very important to me to come to Mary's Center and to have a person to talk to. I also learned so many things that I know will be helpful for my future," says Carmen.

Carmen hasn't seen her mother for almost a year, and even though she misses her, she feels that is better this way. She wants to keep the memory that she had of her mother when she was a child.

Carmen turned 15 in March, and graduated from the Mary's Center Peer Educator Program on May 31. She is still living at a foster home but her cousin — Carmen's beloved aunt's son — and his wife who live in DC, are in the process of getting Carmen's custody and she is very excited about living again with her own family.

Meanwhile, Carmen keeps participating of the Teen Program at Mary's Center with the Summer Youth Program, and she plans to be a professional in the future to help those persons who have been through domestic violence episodes.

Our Staff

Medical Staff at Mary's Center



This is the team of healthcare providers that look after our patients every day. From left to right: Pediatricians Karen Mazie, Kathryn Richardson and Jessica Schroeder; midwives Cathy Ruhl and Kate Curtis; Nurse Practitioners Jennifer Femino and Helen Teclemariam; Family Practice Doctor Sharmila Aryal, and Internist Rosemarie Rollins-Folks.

Seated, left to right: Dr. Cheryl Focht, Pediatrician and Medical Director of Outreach and Education; Dr. Candace Mitchell, Dentist and Vice President for Medical Affairs; and Dr. Ricardo Fernandez, Internist and Chief of Adult Medicine.

We want to recognize our medical staff for their passionate and dedicated service on behalf of our patients and our community.

Thirteen medical providers care for more than 8,000 clients that currently receive services at Mary's Center. Our providers are extremely committed to their clients; without this level of dedication, serving this large number of clients would not be possible.

Children account for the majority of our patients, and they receive superior care from our four devoted pediatricians. Dr. Cheryl Focht, Dr. Jessica Schroeder, Dr. Kathryn Richardson and Dr. Karen Mazie ensure that every child who comes to Mary's Center for care receives first-rate treatment.

Our pediatricians are responsible for the healthy development of each child, beginning with a baby's first well-child visit and continuing through each check-up during a child's life. Our pediatricians work to involve parents in the progress of their child, and their encouragement helps to create healthy and stable families.

"We have the most adorable, fun, inquisitive and chubby kids in the District," expresses Pediatrician and Medical Director of Outreach and Education, Dr. Cheryl Focht, who has been at Mary's Center for eight years.

Along with the pediatricians, our Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Jennifer Femino, provides the same type of caring medical service to the children who attend our school-based clinic located at Brightwood Elementary School.

Our expectant mothers who attend Mary's Center are also fortunate to have our dedicated midwives, Niki George, Cathy Ruhl and Kate Curtis, at their side during this special time in their lives. The relationship between our midwives and their patients is not merely professional, as our midwives always take a strong personal interest in the lives and futures of their patients.

"The midwives at Mary's Center make you feel [as if] you were part of their family; you can tell that they really care about you, your baby and your health, and that makes me feel very well," says Maritza Argueta, who will have her baby girl in December.

For adult check ups, annual exams, sick visits, family planning visits, referrals and follow ups, as well as for the care of our teens, we count on Dr. Ricardo Fernandez, Chief of Adult Medicine,

Dr. Rosemarie Rollins-Folks, Internist, Helen Teclemariam, Nurse Practitioner, and Dr. Sharmila Aryal, Family Practice Doctor, who provides care of patients of all ages at our new site at Kennedy Street. They all work to provide not only an optimum health condition to their patients but also to improve their quality of life.



Midwife Niki George is one of Mary's Center founders. Throughout these years, she has taken thorough care of thousands of mothers-to-be.

This team of medical professionals is coordinated by Dr. Candace Mitchell, our recently appointed Interim Vice President for Medical Affairs. Dr. Mitchell has been our dentist on the Mama & Baby Bus, our mobile health clinic, for the past three years. Her twenty years of clinical and health management experience help her to guide our team of medical and dental professionals in providing comprehensive health care at Mary's Center.

Each of the 13 providers at Mary's Center sees an average of 15 to 20 patients every day, totaling more than 200 physician visits per day and more than 1,000 visits per week. Patient care is supported by an outstanding group of nurses, medical assistants and lab technicians.

Another strength of this medical team is the variety of languages they speak; this ability has allowed for increased communication with our patients. Since more than 80% of clients are immigrants from all over the world, this skill ensures both quality care and higher patient satisfaction.

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Our Programs

What's new at Mary's Center?

Mary's Center opens a new site in Ward 4

For the first time this neighborhood will have a community health care center

On Saturday, July 9, the sun shone as if it was celebrating one of our greatest achievements of 2005 with us - the Grand Opening of our new health center in the underserved community of Ward 4.

Thanks to the Federally Qualified Health Center designation by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Bureau of Primary Health Care, Mary's Center was able to open this new site and expand our services to the residents of Ward 4, which is the most populated of DC's eight Wards and yet has been home to not one non-profit primary care provider.



The community showed its interest and support to Mary's Center's new site at the Grand Opening.

The new site, located at 508 Kennedy Street, N.W., is currently providing adult and pediatric medicine, social services, mental health, and home visits, as well as Medicaid, food stamps, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) enrollment. Future plans include the addition of dental care.

"Little by little we are implementing the services that we offer at our main center in Adams Morgan, and we expect to be providing our entire gamut of services in the near future," said Maria Gomez, President and CEO.

We want to acknowledge all of the wonderful people who were instrumental in the opening of this new site, as well as the important personalities who attended our Grand Opening to celebrate our triumph of expansion with us and with the new community we are serving.

It was very pleasant to have the company of the Honorable Linda Cropp, Chairman of the DC Council; Ward 4 Council Member

Adrian Fenty; the Director of the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs, Gustavo Velasquez; the Executive Director of the DC Primary Care Association (DCPCA), Sharon Baskerville; our Project Officer with HRSA, Linda Overstree; the Chair of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4D, Keith Jackson; the Activities Director of the Barney Senior Center, our next door neighbors, Donna Ellis, and of course, our board members, Guadalupe Pacheco, Elizabeth Griffith, Estelle Cooke-Sampson and Eluvia Sanchez, as well as the many neighbors and friends who shared with us this special day.

And last but not least, we want to especially thank the enthusiasm and dedication of our sponsors of the event, Chartered Health Plan and Telemundo, Telenoticias 64, which contributed to a fun, entertaining and successful afternoon.

Establishing Outstanding Partnerships

Mary's Center and Venture Philanthropy Partners

Investment Agreement

Mary's Center entered into a multi-year investment partnership with Venture Philanthropy Partners (VPP), a philanthropic investment organization working to improve the lives of children from low-income communities through the pursuit of two interrelated goals. VPP helps strengthen nonprofit organizations, offering major funding and significant management expertise and other non-financial resources that are too rarely available to nonprofits. Second, VPP joins with others in the field to inspire philanthropists, corporate and nonprofit leaders, and public policymakers to help increase the effectiveness and the flow of capital, talent, and other resources to nonprofit organizations meeting the core needs of children.

The Investment Agreement will provide Mary's Center with strategic assistance and funding of up to \$3,000,000 over a four-year period. This is in addition to \$400,000 provided for the business planning phase which was recently completed.

"The business plan developed with VPP has given us an amazing road map that gives me hope and provides me the fuel to continue with the vision and the leadership for this organization," says Maria Gomez, Mary's Center President and CEO.

We express our thanks to the Venture Philanthropy Partnership investors and to VPP team members Steve Seleznow, Shirley Marcus Allen, and Eleanor Rutland for making this partnership a reality. We also acknowledge the important support of the many program funders, Board members, volunteers and friends who have put their trust in Mary's Center dating back to our inception in 1988, enabling to reach where we are today.

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Program News In Brief

Kalorama Artists' Fair & Mother's Day Brunch

This year, we tried something new with our Kalorama Artists' Fair and our Mother's Day Brunch, two of our traditional fundraisers. We held both events during the same weekend, and it worked amazingly well for the Center.



Thanks to these wonderful artists, Carmen Torruella Quander and Roberta Gottesman, the Kalorama Artists' Fair 2005 was a successful event.

The Kalorama Artists' Fair was held on May 6 and 7, and it featured more than 200 pieces from more than 50 local, national and international artists. The exhibit showcased a delightful variety of paintings, sculptures, photographs, pottery, jewelry, and more, and we received 50% of each sale donated to Mary's Center.

And the Mother's Day Brunch was held on Mother's Day, May 8, with a wonderful turnout. What made it different and more special from other years is that it took place



Through the support of patrons like Mr. Robert Routt and his wife, Joyce, at our Mother's Day Brunch, Mary's Center continues with its mission to provide better futures to our community.

at our Center rather than at a hotel, which gave the attendees a better sense of what they were contributing to. The artwork from the Kalorama Artists' Fair made this event look beautifully decorated and our guests got the chance to buy the pieces of their preference.

Thanks to the generous support of our friends, we collected more than \$20,000 to provide services for our needy families.

Tutoring Program Takes Off at Mary's Center

One of our most successful new ventures is our after-school tutoring program for school-age children.

Every Tuesday and Wednesday, from 4:30 to 6:00 PM, elementary, middle, and high school students come to Mary's Center for help with their homework.



Children who attend the afternoon tutoring program with the coordinator of the program, and Mary's Center pediatrician, Dr. Jessica Schroeder, and her husband, Ronald Edwards, who is a tutor volunteer.

The program, located in the Ontario Conference Room at 2355 Ontario Road, N.W., pairs volunteer tutors with participating children and teens. Thanks to these dedicated volunteers, children who attend these afternoon sessions have the opportunity to complete homework assignments, read books, and play educational games. Volunteer tutors are still needed for this wonderful program; if you are interested, please contact Andrea Cole at 202-483-8319 ext. 376.

The Urbanitos are here

The summer at Mary's Center arrived with 42 enthusiastic adolescents who came to join the Pro-Urban Youth Program, also known as *Urbanitos*.



Mary's Center's President and CEO, Maria Gomez, prepares pancakes for the Urbanitos, and shares her recipe with them, as a way of welcoming the group.

The *Urbanitos* is an excellent summer project that provides adolescents with the opportunity to work and learn more about different careers.

After receiving an initial training on the Center, the youths joined the various departments to help out on different tasks while they absorbed information that will help them make their decisions on their future studies.

It is always refreshing to witness the presence of young people at Mary's Center, who bring new ideas and lots of energy.

We want to thank our *Urbanitos* for their marvelous support and commitment.

Reach Out and Read Early Literacy Program for Children

Because of the enormous impact books have on the development of children, Mary's Center and the Reach Out and Read Program implemented an early literacy program at our Center in April 2001.

For the past four years, Reach Out and Read has been donating new, age-appropriate

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Program News In Brief

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Patients Frank, Ronald and Karina enjoy a book with Dr. Cheryl Focht and their mother, Laura Hernandez.

books to Mary’s Center. Our Pediatricians then give these books out to children between six months and five years old during their well-visits.

“Books help us observe the development, the attention, and the vision of each child we see. It is also important to advise parents on reading aloud to their children,” says Dr. Cheryl Focht, pediatrician and director of this program at Mary’s Center.

The Reach Out and Read program has produced extraordinary outcomes, not only for Mary’s Center patients, but also for the millions of children served annually nationwide.

“Some studies of the program showed an extraordinary increase in parents reading to their children, compared with parents who were not involved in Reach Out and Read. Two recent studies have also shown a link between Reach Out and Read and improved child language skills,” expressed Rachael Walker, Executive Director of Reach Out and Read of Metro DC.

Mary’s Center was the first organization in DC to take part in the program (there are now 25 other organizations involved), and the Center annually distributes 3,500 books to our youngest patients.

Our Staff

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Each provider speaks at least two languages, and these languages include English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Nepali, Hindi, German, American Sign Language, and African dialects such as Amharic, Djerma, Changana, and Tigrigna.

“Talking to midwife Niki George, in Djerma, our local dialect from Niger, always makes me feel close [to] home,” expresses Husseina Himou, a Mary’s Center patient.

Mary’s Center feels extremely fortunate to have such an extraordinary health care team. We thank them not only for their expertise and professionalism, but also for their sense of commitment towards developing a better future for a community in need.

Our Programs

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Mary’s Center and Howard University Hospital

Dental services to respond to an urgent need

Mary’s Center has recently started providing dental services through a new partnership with the Howard University College of Dentistry. For the past three years, Mary’s Center has provided dental care for patients through the Mama and Baby Bus, our mobile health clinic that visits underserved neighborhoods. Mary’s Center has now increased access to dental care in the District with this new program at Howard University. This is an enormous improvement for the city, due to the limited number of centers that currently provide dental services. Dental services are provided at the Thomas E. Jeter Community Dental Center, located on the grounds of the Howard University College of Dentistry.

Mary’s Center and Greater Southeast Community Hospital

Home Visits to assist with patients needs

Starting in June, Mary’s Center expanded its Healthy Families DC program to include a new partnership with Greater Southeast Community Hospital.

Healthy Families DC is a home visitation program for families with children up to five years old to ensure that children are healthy, safe and ready for school.

The partnership will allow Greater Southeast Community Hospital to provide additional resources and support to their pregnant and parenting patients. It is also designed to provide outreach so that those women who have not yet accessed prenatal care can enroll in the Healthy Families DC and the prenatal program at Greater Southeast Community Hospital.

The initial partnership is for one year, and during this time, our Family Support Workers in charge of doing the home visits will support Greater Southeast Community Hospital patients with maintaining their prenatal care appointments, preparing them for the arrival of the baby, screening for depression and support concerns, and implementing the prenatal curriculum with them. Once the baby is born, Mary’s Center Family Support Workers will implement the *Parents as Teachers* child development curriculum, assess needs, provide referrals and ensure that appropriate social and emotional supports are in place for the family.

Join the Compadres of Mary's Center!

The Compadres is a group of dedicated supporters who have pledged a monthly contribution to make sure that Mary's Center can always count on a steady source of funding. They've done so because they realize that the needs of the families we serve remain constant, regardless of the day, week, or season.

Mary's Center recognizes the Compadres at a yearly members-only reception, and with a special listing in our newsletter and annual report.

To learn more about the Compadres or to join today, call our Development Office at 202-483-8319 x341, or complete the form below.

Compadres Enrollment Form

Join the Compadres by making a regular, monthly donation to Mary's Center. Choose a preauthorized debit from your bank, or a monthly credit card payment. Like direct deposit, this program is easy and efficient. At the same time, it reduces costs to Mary's Center, so your gift achieves more.

Use this Enrollment Form to make your choices – gift amount, gift date, and from which account the gift is to be drawn. The first transaction will be within four weeks of your enrollment, and we will notify you beforehand. In addition, we will send a year-end statement for your records. Thank you for your important support!

Name : _____

Address: _____

Phone : _____

E-mail: _____

Monthly gift amount (\$10 or more) _____

Date of transaction* 1st of the month 15th of the month

** if the scheduled transaction falls on a weekend or holiday, it will be processed the next business day.*

Monthly bank debit – please return this form with a **voided check** to the address below.

Bank name: _____

Account number: _____

Routing number: _____

Credit Card Payment – please return completed form.

Visa MasterCard American Express

Account number: _____

Expiration date: _____

I authorize Mary's Center to process the monthly donation as indicated above. I understand that this payment will continue until I request that it stop, and that any changes must be made in writing.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Mail to: David Bender, Development Office
Mary's Center
2333 Ontario Road, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009

Questions? Phone: 202-483-8319 ext. 341
E-mail: dbender@maryscenter.org

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) 483-8319, ext. 226.

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



Executives from Fannie Mae planted our garden following architect Carlos Somoza's highly detailed plan.

New Garden thanks to our volunteers

Thanks to hardworking volunteers from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and Fannie Mae, and with assistance from our volunteer landscape architect Carlos Somoza, we now have a new and improved garden at Mary's Center!

In early April, volunteers from the IADB arrived at Mary's Center and spent the day weeding, mulching, and preparing the soil for planting. Later in the month, Fannie Mae volunteers spent their day planting gorgeous flowers and plants, specially chosen and staged by Mr. Somoza, in our garden. The end result is a magnificent blossoming garden in front of our new entrance for all of our staff, clients and neighbors to enjoy.

Thanks to our dedicated team of volunteers, Mary's Center has again become a beautiful attraction within the neighborhood.

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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 — yet independently — to 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 Umazor at (202) 483-8319, ext. 346.



Mary's Center for Maternal & Child Care

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