



PERSPECTIVES



Federally Qualified Health Care Center
National Council of La Raza Affiliate

FALL 2006

The Road Ahead



Maria Gomez, National Missing Children's Day

Mary's Center continues to grow, hearing the voices of the community and building services to foster our families and their needs. Many of our families are moving to new areas, specifically in Maryland and we are being told that they want our services now, more than ever.

Our doors in Maryland will open in 2007, working in collaboration with

Washington Adventist Hospital to serve Montgomery County families. As this collaboration progresses, our goal is to increase



Guadalupe Pacheco

community sustainability providing care to the most vulnerable. This collaboration will harness federal and private dollars into the county to encourage thriving and vibrant families, providing our community with culturally competent care. In meeting the clarion of our under-served and immigrant communities, we are eager to

partner with other groups and service providers to guarantee the health, well being and economic stability of families from DC to Maryland.

Mary's Center remains undeterred in its efforts to advocate for our most resilient yet vulnerable families. We originated to meet the needs among the District's new immigrant populations. Today, we are unwavering in our commitment to this community as we continue to evolve, providing services for all under-served populations.

As we rise to meet these needs, increasing the quality of our services and the volume in which we deliver care, philanthropic assistance is essential. Each of us shares a responsibility to our communities, our neighbors and our friends. We all want to live in safe, thriving and civically active communities; Mary's Center provides this promise to the region, fostering healthy, informed and civically responsible families.

We thank you for your support and look forward to continuing our work together *saving lives, creating stronger communities, one family at a time.*

Sincerely,

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

Guadalupe Pacheco
Chair, Board of Directors



Janet Murguía,
president and
CEO of the
National Council
of La Raza.

National Council of La Raza

Mary's Center is honored to have hosted Janet Murguía, president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza along with Anselmo Villarreal, executive director of La Casa de Esperanza, Inc. in Waukesha, WI and NCLR staff at Mary's Center during the month of October. Mary's Center is one NCLR's 300 national affiliates. In total, affiliate organizations provide services to approximately 4 million Hispanic Americans annually.

"Mary's Center fills an eminent and growing need among under-served and immigrant populations in the DC Metro area. Families who may otherwise fall through the cracks are now able to access preventative quality health care, education and social services The Center is an excellent example of work on the front lines, performed with dedication and long term commitment to fostering healthy and resilient families. Lives are being saved daily due to the efforts of affiliates such as Mary's Center. NCLR remains committed to supporting the work of our affiliates and increasing successful outcomes among the millions of families touched. Thank you to Maria for her leadership and vision."

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About Perspectives

Mary's Center was established in 1988 with joint funding from the DC Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs and the DC Commission of Public Health to address the demand for Spanish-speaking maternal and pediatric services in the predominately Latino areas of Ward One. As a federally qualified health center, the Center provides quality and culturally appropriate clinical care, support services and family literacy to all under-served populations residing through out the District.

Perspectives, Mary's Center quarterly newsletter showcases the Center's achievements and the road ahead.

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Our Mission

The mission of Mary's Center is to build better futures through the delivery of health care, education and social services regardless of ability to pay.

www.maryscenter.org

President and CEO Receives Lifetime Achievement Award



Maria Gomez with Donna Dei, March of Dimes director of program services for the National Capital Area Chapter and Rev. Ray Michael Bridgewater, member of the March of Dimes Program Services Committee

The March of Dimes National Capital Area Chapter honored Maria Gomez, president and CEO with the Lifetime Achievement Award for her commitment and service to the Latino community on October 20, 2006.

“The success of Mary's Center has reduced infant mortality and premature birth in the nation's capital and fostered a 20 percent increase in early and adequate prenatal care,” says Dona Dei, director of program services for the National Capital Area Chapter.

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes Maria's desire to have everyone in Washington's at-risk communities enrolled in health care as the driving force of the successful March of Dimes/Mary's Center Mama and Baby Bus outreach for nearly six years. The selections committee recognized this tremendous undertaking: taking prenatal and preventative dental care directly to the people most in need. Congratulations!

Our Clients

The following story shares how integrated clinical and programmatic services provide Mary's Center clients with the support needed to achieve healthy outcomes.

IANE

By looking at her little Dunia, Iane Campos, feels blissful and relieved because the stormy days are in the past, and the horizon of the future brings hope and calm. The news of Iane's pregnancy left her surprised and confused. The hard days were filled with crying and wanting to jump from a building. "I didn't think I could be a good mother. I grew up believing that children were synonymous with problems because that's how my mother saw me and my siblings."

One of ten siblings, Iane was aware of her mother's resentment of having to raise not only her children but those of her husband's previous relationship. "My mother kept complaining about the things she couldn't do because of us," remembers Iane. Pregnancy was not a welcomed state in her mind as she battled the past difficulties with her father, compounded with a weak and unsupportive relationship with the baby's father. All of these challenges led to her strong desire never to have children. Naturally, all of the pressures emerged during her pregnancy. "I was shocked, I didn't want to repeat my mother's story and a baby was the last thing I wanted for my life."

Iane came to the United States from Brazil in 2001 to learn English and to earn her Ph.D. in linguistics. Life in the U.S. was not working out the way Iane expected and she considered a move to France, but the news of a baby changed her plans, and extreme depression set in. Iane became a Mary's Center patient in May 2005 upon learning she was five months pregnant.

During Iane's first visit to Mary's Center, Patricia Naranjo, the family support worker, clearly recognized Iane's signs of depression and referred her to our in-house mental health therapist, Gillian Wood. She explains:

"The model I used was strength based. Often our clients present as absolutely overwhelmed, but when we delve into their backgrounds, they have survived all manner of catastrophes—war, displacement, natural disaster, horrible family abuse, poverty... they are truly the toughest of the



After a difficult pregnancy, Iane Campos wants to be the best mother for her little Dunia.

tough but they just don't necessarily know that. I helped Iane remember her internal strengths and allies, her past successes, and bring them forward to do battle with the presenting crisis and despair."

Step by step, the results of this work were reflected in an increased positive attachment toward her unborn child. Service providers working with Iane all noted her active participation during this process and commitment to keeping appointments and follow through with her personalized treatment plan. Once Dunia was born, "when I saw my baby, I kept saying, 'I am going to do the best for her,'" remembers Iane.

Today Iane's story presents a new perspective. Iane married Dunia's father, originally from Afganistan, and their relationship continues to improve. Dunia is now one year old and thriving in a happy and stable home. Life is smiling at Iane thanks to finding necessary support. "Mary's Center played an important role in my life," states Iane. "They made me feel that it was important to be a mother and they gave me the tools to be so. Now I just want to live this new life correctly for my baby."

Iane remains a Mary's Center participant, finding a medical home and knowing that regardless of what occurs, she will always have the support to take on the challenges of everyday life.

Mary's Center at the Forefront of National Depression Screening Practices

By: Joan Yengo, Vice President for Programs

According to a 1997 National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, the number of Latinos diagnosed with a depressive illness increased 72.9 % since 1992.

Depression affects all of us. It is experienced universally, across cultures, the rich and poor, and yet it continues to hold a stigma, preventing those most in need of accessing care. Further, depression and its impact on physical and emotional development identifies it as a major health concern with an impact as great as diabetes and or high blood pressure, yet it is consistently ignored by providers across the country. Patrick Chaulk of the Annie E. Casey Foundation describes depression as a silent epidemic, that does not get the attention it should. "Ironically, depression is easily diagnosed with very effective therapies to treat it. We would not allow any other health condition that is so easily diagnosed and treated to receive so little attention especially given its profound negative impact on daily functioning, parenting and employment." General health screening have not traditionally included depression. Mary's Center is presently at the forefront of advocating for public policies and funding to include screening and treatment for depression that ultimately will save lives.

Latino children, particularly those from low-income families, are significantly more likely than Caucasian children to suffer from poor mental health outcomes, according to a 2001 report by the U.S. Surgeon General. This may be because Latino parents are less likely to discuss their child's mental health with a doctor, either because they are ashamed or because they don't consider the symptoms to be a medical problem.¹ Latina teens consistently report higher levels of depression, elevated depressive symptoms and suicide ideation than any other group of adolescents.²

In the last three months the Board on Children, Youth, Families of the National Research Council, the Institute of Medicine and the National Centers for Children and Poverty recognized Mary's Center's contributions toward the on going dialogues around depression and successful treatment outcomes through the Healthy Start Healthy Families Program. Mary's Center's Healthy Start Healthy Families Program model is based upon standards for best practices

that incorporate training, monitoring outcomes and proven curriculum. The implication of these findings indicates that the earlier the intervention and ability to reduce family risk factors that increase situational depression such as housing, job placement, education; the greater the ability to prevent post partum depression. In the United States, depression affects nearly 7% of men (6 million men)³ and women ages 18 to 45 years of age account for the largest proportion of people suffering from depression.⁴ Decreasing depression leads directly to healthier families and increasing opportunities for success among the youth in our communities.

There is a three-fold increase in risk of depression during or following a pregnancy among women with a history of mood disorders. Once a woman has experienced postpartum depression, her risk of having another episode of depression reaches 70 percent.⁵

Mary's Center Healthy Start Healthy Families Home Visitation Program findings indicate that of the 162 participating at-risk families who received comprehensive prenatal intervention and support services after screening pregnant mothers for depression, compared to 56 non participating homes, families who received consistent services for a minimum of a six month period, prior to the birth of their child, saw the following long term outcomes:

- Reduction in mental health problems among families
- Improved detection of developmental/school readiness issues in young children
- Children who enter school better prepared to learn (physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally)

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The program is able to identify environmental stressors that may add or exacerbate existing feelings of depression. The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill finds as many as 10 percent to 15 percent of women experience clinical depression during pregnancy or after the birth of a baby.

Mary's Center's Family Support Workers provide services to women confronting situational factors that contribute to feeling overwhelmed and resulting in severe depression. Through the provision of social supports at Mary's Center, women experiencing situational depression show alleviation of their symptoms and by the time their baby is born, they feel ready to form the essential attachment necessary for that infant's full brain development.

The implications on a national scale lead us to identify the major risk factors, the biological, behavioral, and contextual triggers that contribute to the occurrence of maternal depression and parental stress. There are volumes of research documenting the impact of parental depression on early growth and development. Other research documents behavioral problems leading to major crimes and incarceration of children and adolescents associated with untreated parental depression. It is clear that depression as a health problem needs to be treated with the same sorts of screening, interventions, and ongoing monitoring as other

health issues impacting our community, like Diabetes and Asthma. Through early identification and treatment, Mary's Center's program demonstrates that outcomes for children, families and communities are greatly improved. Mary's Center immerses as a model and reestablishes a clinical commitment to holistic assessment, treatment, and prevention of maternal depression. In turn we embrace the broader conversations focused on policy and program interventions to foster healthy parenting under stressful circumstances.

Mary's Center is excited by the outcomes of our home visiting program and the impact that we can have through our holistic approach to care. Our hope is that in the future depression will be brought to the forefront, and innovative programs such as ours will be replicated across the country.

1. <http://news-service.stanford.edu/news/2006/may31/med-primary-053106.html>
2. Isaacs, Mareasa R. Ph.D, *Maternal Depression: The Silent Epidemic in Poor Communities*, p. 5, Issue Brief #1, February 2006.
3. National Institute of Mental Health.
4. National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.
5. <http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/infofaq/depression.aspx>

Public Perception

August through October the voice of Mirna Amaya, one of Mary's Center's mental health therapists and board member to the DC Board of Professional Counseling was heard across the Spanish airwaves. In a regional media campaign focused on altering public perception around postpartum depression, and decreasing the stigma, mothers and families were offered options and tangible advice to follow during times of depression.

Mirna Amaya appeared on the most popular Latino radio stations along with a feature in Washington Hispanic and El Tiempo Latino, answering common questions and raising public awareness. This campaign was made possible by a grant from the Department of Health reaching over 500,000 listeners.



Mary's Center mental health therapist, Mirna Amaya (right) listens to callers at Viva 900 radio station

Program News In Brief

Mary's Center To Meet Maryland Family Needs

Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care is pleased to announce a new partnership with Washington Adventist Hospital to create a primary care center, providing health care services to Maryland families. "Washington Adventist Hospital's *Vision of Expanded Access* is working to improve access to health care for members of our community. We are pleased to begin this important partnership with Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care—an organization that is also deeply committed to providing health care to resilient yet vulnerable families. We believe that the primary care center will further expand access to health care services for families. We look forward to working with Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care to increase the region's health care safety net," notes Jere Stocks, President of Washington Adventist Hospital. The collaboration will provide primary care to expectant mothers regardless of ability to pay, providing quality care to the most vulnerable families to strengthen the Montgomery County community. The center is expected to open on the heels of the new year.

Successful Back to School Immunization Campaign

Between August 21 and September 1, 2006, Mary's Center in partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) developed an immunization campaign to help meet the needs of DCPS students who were out of compliance with their immunizations at the start of the new school year.

During a one week period, 478 students were immunized, and 250 physical exams were conducted at Mary's Center.



Hundreds of children were able to go back to school thanks to Mary's Center and DC Public School's immunization program.

"The Back to School Immunization Campaign was a combined effort that successfully insured families could send their children back to school with their health care needs met," said Alvaro Simmons, chief operating officer for Mary's Center.

Mary's Center is pro-actively planning an immunization campaign for the 2007-2008 school year in order to support the DC School System to eliminate the gaps related to immunization compliance and the wellbeing of their students.

Mary's Center Opens Charter School

Education Strengthens Families, Mary's Center Family Literacy Program expands services with the opening of a charter school.

The mission of the school is to provide high quality education for adults and children, empowering families through a culturally sensitive family literacy model.

The funding received from the District for the charter school provides additional resources to educate adults and preschoolers at a time when federal funds for the Even Start Program were cut by nearly 50%.

Opening on August 30th, the family literacy program at Mary's Center added an additional literacy level to meet student needs along with an additional day of classes.

Since the inception of the Even Start program at Mary's Center in 1998, over 3,000 families have successfully completed the program.

- *80% completed or advanced an ESL level.*
- *100% completed one or more personal goals.*
- *59% of those who had employment as a goal, obtained or retained a job.*

The Education Strengthens Families charter school marks Mary's Center's continued commitment to family literacy.

Berta Perez, Even Start Program Alumnae



Berta Perez, Even Start Computer Instructor and former student

When I came to the USA (about 12 years ago), I didn't know any English and worst of all I had little education. When I got pregnant with my daughter Kimberly, I found some information about

free English classes at the Even Start Program. I enrolled in the English and computer classes, and I enrolled my daughter in early childhood education classes, hoping that I would have more opportunities to find a better job if I could speak this country's first language. I built up my self-esteem while I was coming to the English class because I was capable of communicating with others.

My expectation for a better life was getting bigger, and I decided to take GED classes in another school. Since I had a low-level education, I felt very fortunate to know enough English to start with my pre-GED classes and I was

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Program News In Brief *(continued)*

very thankful to the Even Start program because of the English I had learned. After two months going to pre-GED classes I was transferred to the GED level and it took me another seven months before I took the real GED test. Finally, in 2000, I passed the GED test at UDC.

Hungry for success I started to take trainings in computer technology. I feel proud to tell you that I am now employed as a computer instructor and I am passing my hopes, my dreams and my knowledge to more than one hundred students per week. At present, I am taking an A-plus certification class, and I am very confident that I will pass the test.

I feel highly rewarded that all the knowledge I have acquired during this entire struggle has been useful for my daughter's education because now I am capable of helping with her schoolwork. I am also now more confident to discuss all issues relating to her education with her teachers. I am very proud to say that she is very sociable and one of best students in her classroom. She almost always gets straight A's.

My experience at the Even Start program helped me to achieve important goals and is helping me to help my family. I think that an ESF charter School will help other families to move toward their own "American dreams."

Berta currently teaches technology classes for the Even Start program at Mary's Center.

Intake, Assessment and Referral Department

Part of Mary's Center's rapid growth includes the introduction of new programs and departments to better fill the needs of the community as they arise.

An example of this is the new Intake, Assessment and Referral Department designed to insure that our client families receive all the comprehensive clinical and support services they need according to the information collected during the intake process.

The department is composed of a culturally sensitive team who identify the holistic needs of the clients coming in for services and refers them to the appropriate programs and services within the center and to external resources when needed. Rigorous follow up is included with each family to track outcomes and to insure that needs are being met.

The Intake, Assessment and Referral Department enables Mary's Center optimize the usage of its resources and staff, allowing the center to better determine the range of services needed by the client.

Educational Baby Showers

Thank you for your donations!



Mary's Center patient, Katherine Alvarez, received the first presents for her twins at our quarterly Educational Baby Shower.

Katherine Alvarez was one of the 37 mothers-to-be and new moms attending the most recent Educational Baby Shower held at Mary's Center on August 11th.

For Katherine, who is 17 years old, the gifts received for her and her twin

babies at Mary's Center's quarterly event, were the first and only presents she received during her pregnancy.

Thanks to the support from individuals and organizations that make this event possible, babies like Katherine Michelle and Angeles Maria Alvarez, born on August 30th, have new comfy clothes, blankets, bottles, toys and diapers for their basic needs.

On behalf of our families who benefit from the donations at our Educational Baby Showers, Mary's Center extends its gratitude.

Special Thanks To:

- *American Lung Association*
- *Chartered Health Plan*
- *Edelman*
- *Fight for Children*
- *The Food Bank of the National Capital Area*
- *G Street Fabrics*
- *HSC*
- *Adriana Nino*
- *Beth Garcia*
- *Dayna Edwards*
- *Ginny Spevak*
- *Lourdes Henry*
- *Prue Hoppin*
- *Rachel Sylvan*
- *Sally McConnell*
- *Simone Goring*
- *Tania Sechriest*
- *Zoe Neuberger*

If you are interested in making monetary or in-kind donations for Mary's Center's Educational Baby Showers, please contact Priscilla Vasquez at 202-420-7052. Gifts may include lotions, shower gels, etc. for moms and unisex gifts for babies (preferable in greens or yellows) are much appreciated.



Save the Date for Noche Tropical

November 11, 2006

Mary's Center invites you to celebrate the many successes achieved during 2006 at its sixth annual fundraising gala, Noche Tropical, on Saturday, November 11, at the Homer Building in downtown, DC.

Join us for an evening of tantalized taste buds, dancing, live music by Orquesta La Romana, and live auction to benefit clinical, social and educational services provided by Mary's Center as we continue to meet the demand for services within the community.

Please support the services provided to our resilient yet vulnerable children and families. For tickets, sponsorship, and advertising opportunities, please call (202) 420-7172. Tickets may also be purchased on-line at www.maryscenter.org. Bid online for silent auction adventures at www.maryscenter.cmarket.com.



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