

# CONNECTION



**BRINGING  
MARY'S CENTER  
TO YOUR HOME**

# A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND THE CEO

Dear Friends,

These past months have been nothing short of challenging. We have all suffered losses. Loss of loved ones, loss of income, loss of stability and security. The medical, economic, and social impact of this pandemic is enormous. But we are getting through it together.

As we look back on the year, one word comes to mind that defines the efforts and persistence shown by our community – **resilience**. Resilience is withstanding and enduring. It is remaining upright as the world caves in.

**Our participants are resilient.** From the immigrant parents excluded from government relief who risked their lives performing essential jobs to help others survive, to the Mary's Center teens taking on more responsibility at home while helping younger siblings stay connected to school, our participants have remained strong, united, and determined to succeed.

**Mary's Center healthcare providers are passionate warriors.** Facing rising infection rates and extreme uncertainty, they came to work each day armed with courage and compassion. For weeks, they put the well-being of our community and their commitment to quality care ahead of themselves. Whether it was the family support workers hand-delivering essential toiletries; the school-based mental health therapists working around the clock, so students, families, and school communities remained supported and engaged; or the medical providers administering COVID-19 tests to the uninsured, each of their actions built hope.

**Finally, you, our loyal supporters, are our superheroes.** As the crisis progressed, you decided to act: 1) providing our frontline team and participants the lifesaving personal protective equipment (PPE); 2) nurturing our team by offering the most delicious and nutritious food; 3) providing support to cover the cost of thousands of COVID-19 tests for the uninsured; and 4) enabling us to enhance our well-established telehealth program. Even though the fight is far from over, you allowed us to persevere, so we never had to surrender.

Thank you again for allowing hope to reign over our lives every day at Mary's Center!

In Solidarity,



Todd A. Cox  
Board Chair  
Director of Civil Society  
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund



Maria S. Gomez, RN, MPH  
President and CEO



Todd A. Cox  
Board Chair



Maria S. Gomez, RN, MPH  
President and CEO

## NAME MARY'S CENTER IN YOUR WILL

Did you know planned gifts are a great way to care for the causes that matter most to you? Including Mary's Center in your estate plan will help ensure our life-changing work remains accessible for generations to come.

Naming us in your will is simple. Here is some suggested language:

"I give and devise to Mary's Center, located in Washington, DC, all (or state percentage) of the rest, residue, and the remainder of my estate, both real and personal, to be used for its general support (or for the support of a specific fund).

**Interested in learning more?  
Call Heather Morgan,  
Chief Development Officer,  
at (202) 579-6198.**

# BRINGING MARY'S CENTER TO YOUR HOME

## MEET YOUR 2020 GALA CO-CHAIRS

**SAVE THE DATE**  
FRIDAY | 7:00PM  
OCT 16, 2020

Passionate, invested, energetic, caring, and the list goes on when describing the commitment Brandon Clay, Director at Tiffany & Co, and Wayne Fortune, Vice President, and Senior Client Advisor at Wealth Management PNC, share in creating pathways to healthier futures. "Mary's Center is our community," said Brandon. "Many don't realize that you can make a difference in the lives of people that are living near you. Mary's Center brings people from different backgrounds together under a shared vision of quality, accessible care, and opportunity."

### **The dynamic duo with a clear vision.**

This year, Mary's Center is excited to have Brandon and Wayne co-chair our first ever Virtual Gala. Bringing their brand of creativity, leadership, and, of course, loads of fun to this year's virtual event, they share a clear vision: **help Mary's Center raise the funds needed to continue offering essential services to over 60,000 individuals throughout the region.**

“ We hope this event inspires others to support Mary's Center's mission in ensuring that access to quality care remains a reality. Our goal is to raise enough funds to increase the Center's impact through the expansion of their transformative healthcare, education, and social services. ”



Wayne Fortune (left) and Brandon Clay (right), Mary's Center Gala Co-Chairs.

Their efforts are especially important this year. As the nation continues to heal and rebuild from the devastating blows of COVID-19, Brandon and Wayne are strengthening Mary's Center's efforts to stay at the forefront of testing and tracking, as well as future vaccination campaigns that must be conducted at the community level. By engaging their networks of business leaders, fashion icons, and local advocates, they are taking Mary's Center's unique approach to care into the homes of new audiences.

### **They also developed this year's Virtual Gala theme: 2020 Vision.**

"It started when we were asked to co-chair," said Wayne. "With two people, you think about double vision. But you're not seeing double. Mary Center has never had a clearer vision of what they are trying to accomplish than now. They have the perfect sight for the future of our community through their unique approach to care. By offering a wide variety of services beyond basic healthcare, the organization

takes a goal-based approach to developing the entire family. From mental health support to education and workforce development, thousands of families can gain the opportunity to become prosperous, achieve their goals, and gain a clear 20/20 vision for their future."

### **Going virtual with positivity and style.**

For the health and safety of all involved, Mary's Center decided to make the gala virtual. "We started the year with a vision of 2020," said Brandon. "Although circumstances changed due to this pandemic, our goal stayed the same. The vision and strength of the mission are still there; we are just taking a different path to get there." Thanks to their tireless efforts, this year's event will be filled with creativity, entertainment, and inspirational stories. From an interactive live and silent auction to a virtual cocktail class and post-event performance, the Virtual Gala will be exciting, engaging, and mission focused.

We are grateful for Brandon and Wayne's leadership and support. In addition to the countless hours they have invested in Gala planning, their companies are both corporate supporters. Both Tiffany & Co and PNC Bank are proud sponsors of this year's Virtual Gala. Celebrate the night away by joining our wonderful co-chairs on Friday, October 16 starting at 7:00 pm. Register for free at [www.MarysCenter.org/Gala](http://www.MarysCenter.org/Gala).

# TELEHEALTH: CHANGING LIVES, ONE VIRTUAL VISIT AT A TIME



Elite Evans (above) is a proud member of the Mary's Center community.

At 37 years old, Elite Evans never expected to be welcoming a newborn. The thought of bringing a third child into this world, during a pandemic, nonetheless, was terrifying. While she was joyful about expanding her family, she was not prepared to navigate care during this time. Early in her pregnancy, Elite, a new resident of the District of Columbia, was referred to Mary's Center, where she met Dr. Monique Powell-Davis, MD, an Obstetrics & Gynecology Specialist and Director of Women's Health Services at Mary's Center.

As someone who had never built a close connection with her doctors, Elite quickly learned she could count on Dr. Powell-Davis. "I loved her energy," said Elite. "She was always going above and beyond." As a black woman, Elite was grateful for the opportunity to have a black doctor. Elite explained, "I had never had a black doctor. I was never given the chance. There is an underlying relatability that exists when black people are cared for by black doctors." It was an essential part of her strong connection with Dr. Powell-Davis.

## Elite was a priority for Dr. Powell-Davis.

**“Being an obstetrician is one of the greatest joys. I have the chance to support individuals like Elite throughout their pregnancy and witness how the care I provide changes their lives and their families' lives but also transforms a community – one patient at a time.”**

**- Dr. Monique Powell-Davis.**



Dr. Monique Powell-Davis (above), Director of Women's Health Services at Mary's Center providing care to an expectant mother.

During her pregnancy, Elite had several in-person appointments at Mary's Center. Then COVID-19 hit the DC area in March, and Elite's birth and postpartum story became anything but predictable. While Mary's Center's system of telemedicine had been established for some time, for Elite, this was entirely new. "I had never experienced anything like this before. I was pleasantly surprised by the ease of telehealth visits and never felt my level of care was lessened." Dr. Powell-Davis continued to be actively engaged in Elite's care, knowing she was at high risk due to her age and hypertension. Elite described Dr. Powell-Davis as "present and persistent; accommodating to my needs both physically and emotionally."

When Elite gave birth to her beautiful son in the middle of a pandemic, she was fearful for her own and her family's health, but receiving quality care in the comfort of her home gave her strength. During virtual postpartum check-ups, Dr. Powell-Davis became alarmed by Elite's high blood pressure, blurry vision, and other red flags. With guidance from Dr. Powell-Davis, Elite took control of her health, checking her blood pressure and weight at home daily. These steps, combined with Dr. Powell-Davis' recommendation of a stay at Howard Hospital, led to Elite being diagnosed with post-partum preeclampsia and postpartum depression.

This diagnosis was heartbreaking but Elite credits Dr. Powell-Davis for staying by her side, noting if it wasn't for her, "I might not have my life right now." With enhanced awareness of her health and a clinician like Dr. Powell-Davis, Elite was able to take control of her symptoms and receive the proper medications and mental health care. She strongly believes that during this time of virtual care, "you must help your doctor help you." Elite, her 3-month old, and her two other children continue to thrive. She is comforted knowing her health and well-being remain a top priority for Dr. Powell-Davis and Mary's Center.

Today, you can make a difference in the lives of other participants like Elite and her family by visiting our website, [www.maryscenter.org/donate](http://www.maryscenter.org/donate).

# SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM ADAPTS DURING PANDEMIC

At Mary's Center, we understand many barriers can impede access to healthcare, which is why we meet our participants at locations convenient for them - in their homes, out in the community, and at school. For example, our School-Based Mental Health (SBMH) program provides high-quality behavioral health services to at-risk students within their schools.

After starting as a grassroots initiative in 2013, the SBMH program quickly proved valuable for overcoming the obstacles that impeded students from attending appointments at our health centers, including the stigma of accessing mental health care and parents' busy schedules. Mary's Center's Director of SBMH Marisa Parrella, LICSW LCSW-C, explained, "If parents are hesitant about accessing behavioral health care in a clinic, due to stigma or the challenges of keeping a weekly

appointment, they may be more willing to come to a familiar setting at school, which also may be closer to their home. Students will also be more willing to talk to someone they are acquainted with." By focusing on prevention, early intervention, and treatment, Mary's Center's bilingual and highly trained therapists work full-time in each of our 23 partner schools to provide culturally appropriate, trauma-informed care.

COVID-19 has forced SBMH therapists to find new ways to provide behavioral health services to students. "For many kids, school is the safest place to be. It's where they socialize, learn, and grow," said Marisa. When the pandemic led to school closures, the SBMH team initially had trouble reaching certain families and students, so program leaders worked directly with schools to identify gaps in students' access to technology. Through generous grants

totaling \$40,000 from companies like PNC, Walmart, and Comcast, Mary's Center is poised to provide students with laptops to ensure no child was left without support during this stressful and isolating time.

While switching to a telehealth platform limits face-to-face connection, SBMH staff have been able to reach more parents and teachers during this time of need because of the convenience that virtual care provides. "The best thing we can do for our teachers is to provide a supportive environment and space to manage their anxiety," said Marisa. "If teachers can be in touch with their self-care, they will be more open to ways they can connect with students and they can be more empathetic."

Because the SBMH team's priority is the well-being and safety of their students, they are preparing for the upcoming school year by hiring and training new staff and securing additional equipment for tele-behavioral health. "We are preparing new strategies to reach families such as webinars, social media live programming, groups for children and parents, and teacher wellness activities to also support the well-being of teachers," Marisa shared.

The pandemic has revealed many ways telehealth can permanently supplement the SBMH model. There are no barriers that will stop Mary's Center from ensuring students, families, and teachers are supported in the upcoming school year. We must continue to be a catalyst for their success.



Director of SBMH, Marisa Parrella (far right), pictured with Principal of Tyler Elementary School, Jasmine Brann; Assistant Principal of Powell Bilingual Elementary School, Raquel Carson; Mary's Center SBMH staff Inma Iglesias; DC Councilmember David Grosso; and Mary's Center SBMH staff, Samara Roth.

**Mary's Center is grateful to our corporate, foundation, and individual partners who enable us to provide essential technology to students and ensure they receive the necessary support from the SBMH team throughout the current pandemic.**



# CONNECTION

2333 Ontario Road, NW  
Washington, DC 20009

## IN THIS ISSUE:

A Message from the Board Chair and the President & CEO .....1

Bringing Mary's Center to Your Home .....2

Telehealth: Changing Lives, One Virtual Visit at a Time .....3

School-Based Mental Health Program Adapts During Pandemic.....4

ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE PAPER



The upcoming election on November 3rd is an opportunity for citizens to make their voices heard. Although the pandemic may present challenges, we cannot allow it to deter us! The decisions that our politicians make affect every part of our lives, it's local, state, or national elections, get out and vote! Your vote has the power to transform your community and either strengthen or jeopardize the essential services that help our communities gain access to healthy futures and economic stability. Here are a few simple steps to ensure your voice will be heard on Election Day:

- Visit usa.gov to check your voting status or change your voter registration.
- Request an absentee ballot and ensure this request is received at least 7 days before the election.
- Research your candidates' positions.

Speak to your family and friends to make sure they are planning to vote.

## ELECTION DAY: NOVEMBER 3RD

**Karen Corallo**  
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

**Lydia Goring**  
Fulton Mortgage Company

**Clay Harris**  
EAB

**Michelle Klinger**  
NOAA Sea Grant

**Jim Rost, MD**  
College Program

**Zulma Barrera**  
Adventist HealthCare

**White Oak Medical Center**  
Adventist HealthCare

**David Vosvick, II**  
Medical Center

**Jonathan Blum**  
Community Advocate

**Stuart M. Butler, Ph.D.**  
Health Management Associates

**Kathy Whelpley**  
an Exelon Company

**Oceana**  
Brookings Institution

## MARY'S CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Todd A. Cox, Board Chair**  
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

**Wendy Goldberg, Vice Chair**

**Anne De Biasi, Secretary**  
Health Policy Consultant

**Nikola Garber, Treasurer**  
NOAA Sea Grant

**Stu M. Butler, Ph.D.**  
Brookings Institution

**Zulma Barrera**  
Adventist HealthCare

**Jonathan Blum**  
Community Advocate

**Stuart M. Butler, Ph.D.**  
Brookings Institution

**Kathy Whelpley**  
an Exelon Company