



## Breaking Barriers So Children Can Thrive.

VNA, MAKING CHILDREN'S LIVES BETTER.



### IN THIS ISSUE

- YES, We Are OK! Face to Face
- NRHC is Making a Difference
- Breaking Barriers
- Donor Listing
- Helping Mother & Child
- Upcoming Events
- St. Catherine Labouré Medical Clinic
- Messori Scholarship Awards

# YES

## we are ok!

by Mary Kay Meeks-Hank

► On November 14,  
we stood in front  
of the zoning board  
and made our case.  
**We were granted  
a variance!**

On any given morning from Friday through Monday, you can find the Dining Room at Face to Face filled with guests “hanging out,” playing cards, reading the paper, talking to one another and enjoying hospitality and a brief respite from the many burdens of poverty. The smell of hot coffee greets you as our guests shuffle in, get settled and slowly relax. Some have spent the night walking, resting where possible, others come from one of several Germantown boarding homes; still others share space in abandoned houses, all from places of inadequate shelter by any standards. Yet, in this common space, there is an overall sense of peace and warmth.

On a recent morning, one of our guests greeted me eagerly asking, “Are we okay? Did everything work out?” I smiled, knowing immediately what he was talking about.

For the past several weeks, I had been talking to the folks of Face to Face and explaining that we needed to seek a zoning variance in order to continue our work. Our building, erected in the late 1800’s, had been zoned



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an overall sense  
of peace and  
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residential and, in keeping with the new code, we had to seek a variance. When the bright orange signs went up in front of the building and on the corner of the property, several people asked, "Is everything okay? Will Face to Face still be open?" Each time I was in the dining room, I explained the situation to our clients, assuring them that we will certainly remain open, but that we needed to follow through with this issue.

On November 14, we stood in front of the zoning board and made our case. We were granted a variance!

My smile at the guest's question a few days later had less to do with the actual outcome of the hearing and more to do with my gratitude for his sense of ownership. He had asked, "Are we okay?" We had sought a variance from our residential zoning, yet his question ironically harkened to the sense of "home" he feels here. I answered without hesitation, "We are okay. We are most certainly okay."

Face to Face provides an array of services: a soup kitchen with sit-down dining, health center, legal and social services, children's programming, arts for adults and a shower facility for those in most need. All of these services are critically important to our clients. But, at the end of the day, the way these services are delivered is most important. The welcoming hospitality, the mutual respect and the sense of home we provide all lead to a place of transformation where client, staff, and volunteer can each say, "We are okay." Face to Face is just that kind of place. ■

# NRHC

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Steven Tyson



Ms. Hildeberta Aparricio is a 31 y.o. married Hispanic woman with 5 children who lives in Norristown PA. She has children ranging from 11 yo, 10 yo, 8 yo, 5 yo, to a 3 month old baby girl. She moved from Mexico to New York and has been living in the Norristown area

for the past 3 years. Ms. Aparricio first came to the Norristown Regional Health Center (NRHC) 2 yrs ago seeking medical attention for herself and her family as she and one of her children were not feeling well, she had no insurance and had heard that she could receive good quality care here. Ms. Aparricio is now seen on a regular basis by health care providers in adult family medicine and her younger children are seen in Pediatric Services. NRHC staff have also assisted her in getting health insurance coverage for her children. She reports that the services and quality of care that the Norristown Regional Health Center offers has made a huge difference with her family's health. She also stated that the NRHC has become part of her family and that they will continue coming to the center. NRHC is grateful for support from Green Tree Community Health Foundation. ■



# Breaking Barriers so Children can Thrive

by Denise Frattara

**Darlene is practical**, matter of fact and low-key. Her personality has been honed over the years by the challenges she has faced as a single mom focused on raising her four special needs children. Aaron, Angela, Chrissy and Kimberly.... these kids keep her moving, and her work is never quite finished.

This was not how it started. Darlene and her now former husband, who had a spinal cord injury himself, made the decision together to foster and adopt children with special needs so that these children would have a solid loving family home in which to thrive. The kids do have that home; but it is just with Darlene now.

Aaron, Angela, Chrissy and Kimberly.... between these four kids, there is sadly, a virtual laundry list of grim di-

agnoses: blindness, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, brain injury, mental illness and asthma. The illnesses these children face are extremely serious. The primary health care that they receive at the Ginny Coombs Children's Health Center of VNA-Community Services, Inc. is top-notch. The work VNA does providing great care and eliminating barriers to care for Darlene and her children make their lives better.

Funded by the Green Tree Community Health Foundation and others, the Center utilizes a patient-centered medical home model of care. The model focuses on providing personalized care that is coordinated, effective and efficient. It offers patients a high level of accessibility; provides excellent communication among patients and utilizes the latest information technology to prescribe, communicate, track test results, obtain clinical support information and monitor performance. VNA was one of the first nurse-managed health centers in Southeastern Pennsylvania to achieve certification as a patient-centered medical home level 2 through the National Centers for Quality Assurance and is now certified at a level 3 - the highest level of quality care. At a time when insurance companies and healthcare funders are seeking measurable outcomes for care, the quality offered through the

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Angela and Aaron sharing a peach while waiting their turn at the Ginny Coombs Children's Health Centers of VNA-Community Services, Inc.



- ▶ Together this care team works to help at-risk babies, children, adolescents and young adults build better futures by focusing on the basics.

VNA ensures that our services will be available into the future to continue to meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

For Darlene, this model means that she is a co-professional with the VNA health care team working along side VNA staff. Darlene knows that this is unique and this is one of the reasons that she has continued bringing her children to VNA for the past 14 years. “The kids are comfortable and the staff takes a long time with them,” says Darlene.

She continues, “Where else can I take them? At any other place, meeting their needs, especially with referrals and paperwork, might be a challenge. VNA is great with all of the paperwork!” The care provided has made her life easier and has helped her children thrive.

The Ginny Coombs Children’s Health Center, the nurse-managed health center of VNA-Community Services, Inc., provides quality primary health care to uninsured and underinsured children and to children who receive medical assistance. The Center provides 5,700 visits to over 1,600 at risk children each year at the Center in Abington and at four area residential treatment centers including Wordsworth Academy, Carson Valley Children’s Aid, North Star Youth Services and St. Mary’s Villa. The infants, children and teens served are from low-income, high-risk families. Patients receiving care include immigrants, children with single parent teenage mothers, children referred from area schools, foster children from group homes and homeless or abuse shelters and increasingly children whose families work at low-paying jobs without health insurance. Two-thirds of the children seen in our centers have diagnosed physical or emotional disabilities.

The team of health care professionals at VNA includes nurse practitioners, registered nurses, medical assistants, a case manager, a nutritionist and a social worker. Together this care team works to help at-risk babies, chil-

dren, adolescents and young adults build better futures by focusing on the basics. VNA provides well baby and well child primary care visits, sick visits, sports and school physicals, immunizations, care of chronic conditions, care for minor accidents and injuries, developmental assessments, case management, nutritional counseling and one-on-one support connection to up to 22 separate benefits and community support programs. Funding from the Green Tree Community Health Foundations allows VNA staff to spend the extra time necessary to provide our children with high quality care and the patient and family health education necessary to support each child’s healthy development.



Located in Abington, the Ginny Coombs Children’s Health Center of VNA-Community Services, Inc., provides primary health care and related services for 1,600 vulnerable children who reside in Montgomery County and surrounding communities. The agency provides health and social services to over 5,200 individuals each year.

“The personalized services and best practices of care that are provided by the staff of the Centers is amazing and makes a real difference in the lives of the children and their families”, says Executive Director, Richard Cirko. Cirko continues, “funding from the Green Tree Community Health Foundation makes this work possible and has helped VNA provide the care necessary to help Darlene’s

*continued on page 10* ▶



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## Giving to Green Tree Community Health Foundation



Do you want to make a lasting contribution to the health and welfare of neighbors, friends and the community right here in Northwest Philadelphia? Do you want to ensure the wellbeing of the next generation who will make Chestnut Hill, Mount Airy, Germantown, Nictown or Norristown their home? Here's how.

You can make a planned gift—a gift that you plan now to assist Green Tree in the future. The most popular way to make a planned gift is to remember Green Tree in your will. You can specify a dollar amount or a percentage of your estate. You can remember Green Tree alongside other charitable organizations that you want to be a part of your legacy.

We recently received notice from a woman and her adult son about their plans. Based on the information they have read through the Foundation's publications, each of these supporters decided to direct \$50,000 of their estates to Green Tree. As they wrote to tell the Foundation their plans, they explained that they come from generations of family with roots in this section of the city, and they want to contribute to the community's welfare long after they are gone. In this way, they will

continue the family's good work in the community for generations to come. And we say a genuine "thank you" for this kind of farsighted generosity!

A charitable gift annuity (CGA) is a way to do well financially while doing philanthropic good, and it is the second most common planned gift. In exchange for an asset like cash or stock or even real estate or a paid-up life insurance that you donate to Green Tree, the Foundation will pay you a specified income for life. The actual amount varies according to your age and the number of beneficiaries (maximum of two). There are additional benefits to the donor in the initial charitable deduction you receive, and the favorable tax treatment of the income that is tailored to your situation. You can even establish a charitable gift annuity now, and decide later when you want to begin receiving your income payments!

If either of these possibilities interest you, and you have a desire to ensure the grant-making that benefits elders, children, uninsured and underinsured residents right here in the Northwest sector of Philadelphia, contact: **Susan Hansen** at **215-438-8102** or email us at **susanhansen@greentreecommunityhealth.org**.

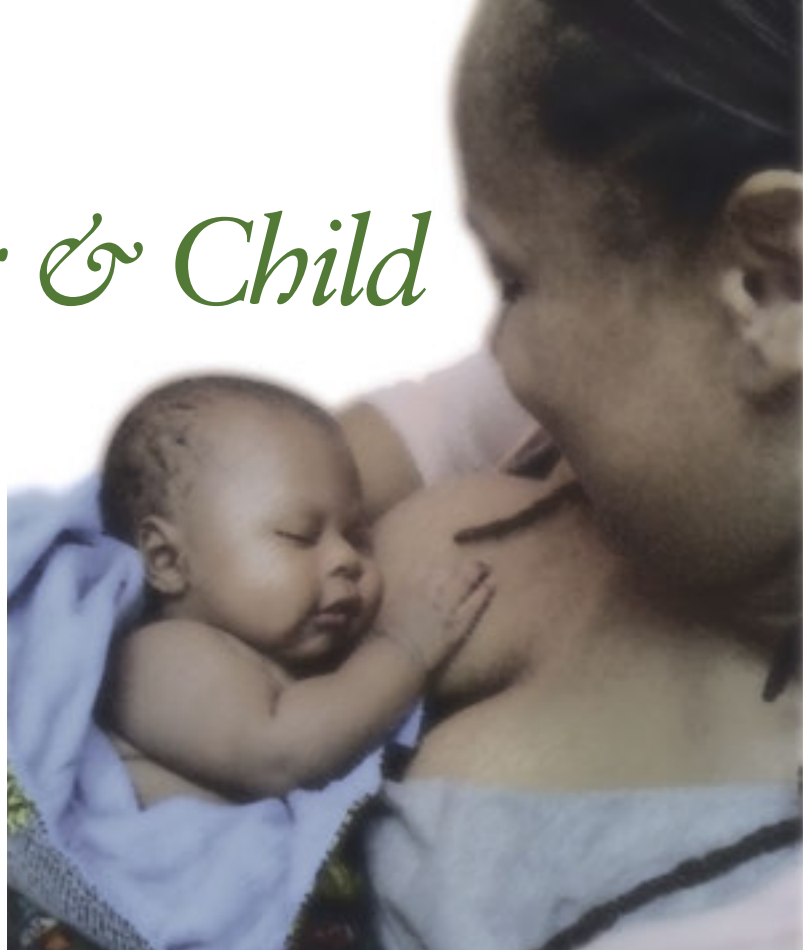


# Breastfeeding Resource Center: *Helping Mother & Child*

by Janice McPhelin, IBCLC

Breastfeeding has been a hot topic in the media lately. New research emerges constantly touting the health benefits of breastfeeding, and then there are flashy stories like the controversial Time magazine cover last May showing a young mom breastfeeding her 3 year old son. Here at the Breastfeeding Resource Center (BRC), our stories are about regular, everyday mothers. The nearly 1000 mothers that walk through our doors every year share similar stories. They want to breastfeed their babies, their doctors and nurses strongly encourage them to breastfeed, they spend months planning to breastfeed, and then problems arise and there is nowhere to turn for help. Mothers like 'Crystal', whose baby was not latching correctly and feedings were terribly painful. Instead of enjoying her baby, she was dreading every feeding. About every two hours, her son Gabriel would need to feed; Crystal would clench her teeth and hold her breath to get through it. This is not what she had pictured motherhood to be. Her baby's pediatrician told her that a lactation consultant could help, but Crystal's insurance didn't cover for lactation services. Crystal was out of work on unpaid maternity leave and already stretching her meager budget, so paying out of pocket was not an option.

Thanks to grant funding from organizations including Green Tree Community Health Foundation, the BRC offers a sliding scale of payment for moms like Crystal. One visit to the BRC turned this situation around. At the BRC, Crystal spent an hour with an International



Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLCs are the only health care professionals who specialize in breastfeeding). She helped Crystal find a position that allowed her to feed without pain and gave her a care plan for home. Crystal left the BRC empowered with the tools to make breastfeeding work, to nurse without pain, and to ensure that her baby was thriving. Gabriel is now chubby and healthy, and Crystal is enjoying breastfeeding. Oftentimes just one visit to the BRC can fix difficult breastfeeding problems, and renew a mother's faith in her abilities. If moms need ongoing support, the BRC is always here for them, with free weekly support group meeting and follow up care. ■



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For more information about the outing, call or visit:

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“The clinic has enabled me to live”

~ Mr. Matthews



## St. Catherine Labouré Medical Clinic

by Ashley Collier McBride

Before coming to St. Catherine Labouré Medical Clinic, Mr. Matthews had a stable job as a gardener and did not have to worry about health insurance or having enough money to buy food and pay the bills. Not even diabetes, a heart attack, or triple bypass surgery could slow him down, but he developed severe cataracts that led to his becoming essentially blind. His ophthalmologist informed him that surgery to remove the cataracts was his only hope to regain his eyesight. Unfortunately, right before his operation was scheduled to take place, Mr. Matthews lost his job. Now he was faced with no income, no health insurance, no medications, and therefore no chance to get his vision back. The misfortune continued as Mr. Matthews lost his home and began living in the shelter at Depaul USA in Germantown.

It was at the shelter that Mr. Matthews learned about St. Catherine Labouré Medical Clinic. Mr. Matthews became a patient of St. Catherine's. When he became a patient, his diabetes was out of control. He had been treating his diabetes with injections from an insulin pen. Unfortunately, his cataracts were so bad that he was not able to see the dosage and was repeatedly giving himself the wrong amount of insulin.

Once he became a patient at the clinic, his high blood pressure and heart disease were quickly addressed with proper treatment and medications. His diabetes was not as easily managed and it took some trial and error before

the proper amount of insulin was determined. Due to his blindness, he was unable to draw up insulin, but the nurses at the clinic performed the task for him on a weekly basis.

*“The clinic has enabled me to live,” said Mr. Matthews. Without St. Catherine’s, “I wouldn’t have food or medicine. I would be depressed. Every person who walks through this door comes out happy. It has enabled me to live.”*

By preparing his insulin for him and taking readings with a glucometer each week, the clinic has been able to adjust his dosage and ensure that his diabetes remains under control. The next step was to try to arrange cataract surgery.

St. Catherine's met with Green Tree Community Health Foundation to determine what options there might be. Through the bequest of Mabel Callinan, the Foundation had funds available to provide for certain hospital services for uninsured patients. A meeting held among the administrations of St. Catherine, Green Tree, and Chestnut Hill Hospital resulted in a surgical procedure scheduled for Mr. Matthews. Mr. Matthews was able to have surgery in November of 2012 which has changed his life forever. Support from the Green Tree Community Health Foundation has helped St. Catherine's provide much needed care for Mr. Matthews and nearly 850 other uninsured adults in Northwest Philadelphia this year. St. Catherine's Labouré Medical Clinic is profoundly grateful for this support. ■

## *Elissa Messori Jacobsen* *Nursing Scholarships Awarded to* **Chestnut Hill Hospital Nurses**

On December 20, 2012, at an event at the Franklin Institute, five Chestnut Hill Hospital nurses were awarded scholarships from the Elissa Messori Jacobsen Nursing Scholarship Fund, administered by Green Tree Community Health Foundation. The scholarship had been established by Dr. and Mrs. Divo Messori in 2002 in memory of their daughter Lisa, a registered nurse, who died in 2001 after a battle with breast cancer. Many individuals as well as organizations have contributed to the scholarship fund over the years, helping it to grow to the point where it can be a permanently endowed scholarship.

Early in Dr. Messori's career, he was responsible for covering the ICU at Chestnut Hill Hospital—one of the first in the country. Looking back, he says, "There was a young woman acting as head nurse. I will always remember what an excellent nurse she was.... Through her, I realized the importance of nursing care and appreciated the quality of nursing at [Chestnut Hill Hospital]." Further, Dr. Messori reflected that today, "Nurses are under-appreciated and under-rewarded. Hospitals are being asked to do more with less and less and nurses bear the brunt. They deserve the greatest measure of our support." With respect to establishing the scholarship, Dr. Messori said, "Doing this, helping others, means something and helps to get through the loss.... It's a measure of comfort. There is pleasure in giving."



► Marie Schmidt, Lansdale; Danielle Spadafora, Sellersville;  
Lori Stupak, Mt. Airy; Jessica Rose Williamson, Flourtown;  
Kellie Nelson, Philadelphia

Since 2002, 61 scholarships, totaling \$165,407 have been awarded to 43 Chestnut Hill Hospital nurses. The competitive scholarship focuses on nursing education and is considered an investment in the professional development of the awardees, and also an investment in nursing excellence—clinical skill and compassionate care—for the community and Foundation. ■

## Breaking Barriers

*continued from page 4*

children and hundreds of others in our community thrive. We believe that by giving at-risk children on-going preventative health services, quality sick care and patient education we are able improve their health and their lives."

As for Darlene's children, while we want supporters to know how VNA works to help these kids stay healthy and remove barriers to care; we also think it is important that people know who these children are beyond their disabilities because who that are is what truly makes them special.

### **Aaron, Angela, Chrissy and Kimberly.....**

At 17, Aaron is blind and has cerebral palsy. He is the charmer. Darlene says, "He can get anyone to give him anything. He wants to be a detective and listens to the Hardy Boys Mysteries on tape."

Angela came into the family through foster care. At 12, she the youngest and is in charge. According to Darlene, Angela's hidden talent is mimicking voices – she can mimic anyone! Darlene believes that someday she will find a career in Special Education.

Chrissy is the oldest and with Down Syndrome, she is the most predictable and easygoing. At 20, she will soon be transitioning to an adult care provider.

Kimberly, who came into the family as a foster child at eight months of age, has had the roughest time. She struggles with a brain injury and significant behavioral problems. At fourteen, she is currently in a residential treatment facility and is working on making good choices. Kimberly is physically strong. She loves nothing better than doing any outdoor activity...especially hiking.

With VNA's passion for providing the best care for all children in need and the GreenTree Community Health on-going support of our services, we know that all of our children will continue to thrive.

For more information on the **Ginny Coombs Children's Health Center** or the other services of **VNA-Community Services, Inc.** please contact the VNA at **215-572-7880** or on the web at **[www.vnacs.org](http://www.vnacs.org)**. ■





## IN THIS ISSUE

- YES, We Are OK! Face to Face
- NRHC is Making a Difference
- Breaking Barriers
- Donor Listing
- Helping Mother & Child
- Upcoming Events
- St. Catherine Labouré Medical Clinic
- Messori Scholarship Awards



- BCS YES! Youth Empowered to Succeed
- Bebashi - Transition to Hope
- Breastfeeding Resource Center
- Bridging the Gaps
- Center in the Park
- Centro Nueva Creacion
- Chestnut Hill Center for Enrichment
- Chestnut Hill Meals on Wheels
- Children's Crisis Treatment Center
- Chipping Hill Micro Farms
- Delaware Valley Community Health, Inc.
- Depaul USA
- Dragonfly Forest, Inc.
- Face to Face
- Family Services of Montgomery County
- Foundations, Inc.
- Gearing Up
- Intercommunity Action/Journey's Way
- Inter-Faith Housing Alliance
- Kelly Anne Dolan Memorial Fund
- KenCrest Centers
- Keystone Hospice
- LaSalle Neighborhood Nursing Center
- Laurel House
- Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania
- Maternity Care Coalition
- Metropolitan Area Neighborhood Nutrition Alliance (MANNA)
- Mission Kids
- Montgomery Child Advocacy Project
- My Place Germantown
- Northwest Phila Interfaith Hosp Network
- Penn Asian Senior Services
- Phila. Soc. of the Pres. of Landmarks
- Public Citizens for Children & Youth
- St. Catherine Labouré Medical Clinic
- Starfinder Foundation
- Students Run Philly Style
- Temple Time Out Program
- Valley Youth House Committee, Inc.
- Victim Services Center of Montgomery Cnty
- Visiting Nurse Association
- Why Not Prosper, Inc.
- Women's Medical Fund
- Won Community Service Center



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