



Celebrating 30 Years at Esperanza Health Center



*God has been faithful to Esperanza Health Center for 30 years! When I consider the early years, and the last 14 years that I have served as Esperanza's Executive Director, there have been many changes! There have been great victories as well as some challenges along the way. There have been times of joyous celebration and also some discouragement. We have seen many patients improve their health, and some who lost their battles to sickness or disease. Esperanza's holistic care has gone beyond the medical exam room and now extends into our communities. Yet, Esperanza is where it is today because of what has not changed — **and that is the faithfulness of God.** We are thankful for you and others who have partnered with us the past, and who care for our community alongside us.*

Susan Post

Susan M. Post, D.Min, MBA
 Executive Director

The Early Years: The Vision for Christian Healthcare in Philadelphia

With a burden to reach out to the communities of North Philadelphia in the early 1980s, Dr. Carolyn Klaus and her Living Word Community Church developed outreach teams to meet with, pray for, share the Bible, and serve neighbors in practical ways. When Dr. Klaus stepped in for a neighborhood medical clinic that had lost its only doctor, she grappled with how to address her patients' mental health and economic needs. She began to connect some of them to the church outreach teams and made an interesting discovery: these patients recovered faster than her other patients! She was onto something.

"We had stumbled upon a model of healthcare I'd never done before," Klaus says. "I realized I was doing whole person medicine. It wasn't just all taking place in the office." She discovered that despite having more medical schools than anywhere in the country, one-third of Philadelphia residents were medically underserved. She asked the question, "What would healthcare be like in our present culture if God's will were being done?" I like to call this kingdom health care, a gospel-centered, compassionate, whole-person approach that brings hope (*esperanza* in Spanish) into the lives of people desperate for it." Rev. Bonnie Camarda, former administrator of the church, helped Dr. Klaus turn this vision into a reality through many years of prayer, preparation, and learning from the community they hoped to serve.

Photos - Top of Page (L to R): Esperanza's IM Team (Maria Guzman, Nabori Nuñez, Shirley Thompson, RN, Dr. Bryan Hollinger, Ana Lapp, RN and Margaret Adams) at the Wyoming Avenue site; Dr. Tim Leaman with a patient at the Wyoming Avenue site; Medical Assistant Damaris Vega and a young patient at the current Kensington site; dedication of Esperanza's new Kensington Health Center, September 2018; Medical Assistant Gloria Vazquez prepares a vaccine. Photos - Right (top to bottom): Dr. Laura Layer sees a young patient at the current Fifth Street site; former staff members Elizabeth Hernandez, D.Min., Dr. Ramon Gadea and Dr. Trina Wisecup; former provider Rob Reich, PA-C with a patient at the Wyoming Avenue site.





On June 15, 1989, Esperanza opened its original site on North Fifth Street in Philadelphia.



Dr. Carolyn Klaus with the Rev. Billy Graham during his 1992 visit to Esperanza's original site on North Fifth Street.

The First Decade: The Vision Unfolds

With abiding faith, the vision and calling to community-based Christian healthcare in North Philadelphia was born, at last. God opened the doors of Esperanza on June 15, 1989. Rev. Camarda recalls, "In the early days, we had a 2nd floor clinic on Fifth Street, which we called 'Bloque de Oro.' Patients started visiting because they knew we were caring. We accepted everyone. It didn't matter who you were. If you came to the clinic, you were treated with respect, with love, and were given a message that you were important, because God was the one that was ruling us."

Reflecting on those early days, Dr. Billy Robinson, who served as a counselor during Esperanza's first few years, recently posed this question at an Esperanza devotional service: "How do you handle the unpopular assignment?" The founding Esperanza team handled their assignment with a steadfast commitment to gospel-centered medical care for their patients. "They came because of the calling."

The staff grew, as did the number of patients, including many with AIDS. Juan DeJesus arrived at Esperanza in the early 90s and was cared for by Dr. Michael Moore. Juan touched many lives, sharing the love and hope of his new faith in Jesus, despite his own battle with AIDS. "At Esperanza, I'm part of the family. When I came to Esperanza, I was dying. I was dying with AIDS, depressed. Now I'm living with AIDS, not dying!"

More staff were added to meet the needs but finances were waning. Yet, God continued to provide the resources needed at just the right time, and kept Esperanza's doors open. In the mid 1990's, Dr. Klaus transitioned from Esperanza, eventually to a ministry in Ethiopia. Rev. Camarda stepped in as Interim Director during this season of change, and then-Board chair, Nancy Huston Hansen, brought in consultants to improve billing processes and increase donor support to keep the ministry going.

The Second Decade: The Vision Grows

Esperanza continued to grow in faith and impact. In 2000, it outgrew its original space and moved into the basement level of the former Parkview Hospital in Philadelphia's Juniata neighborhood. Dr. Bryan Hollinger, one of Esperanza's long-time physicians and current Medical Director, pulled together the "paper stones of remembrance" that staff posted on rolled paper years ago to chronicle specific ways God had provided for Esperanza. With the help of his family, he reconstructed it into a beautiful 25 foot-long "Wall of Faithfulness," that was framed and erected in the entryway of the new location.

Photo (R): Esperanza staff members shortly after moving to the site at 1331 E. Wyoming Avenue, where the health center continued to serve patients until the fall of 2007.



The Second Decade *(continued)*

In 1996, Mary Beth Swan became the new full-time director and refined business practices. Esperanza received a SmithKline Beecham Community Health Impact Award, and former medical director, Dr. Ramon Gadea, received the Governor's Award for Internal Medicine Excellence. Still, financial challenges continued. In early 2000, Esperanza staff reserved a day to focus on the ways God had been faithful, and to pray for his provision for the future. At the end of this time of prayer and praise, overdue medical reimbursements from the state were wired into Esperanza's account.

Esperanza continued to expand in leadership and service. Current Executive Director, Susan Post, joined the team in 2005 and ushered in new improvements. In 2006, God provided a new satellite site across the street from the original location on North 5th Street where it all began, and that same year Esperanza achieved Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) certification. When the hospital in Juniata changed ownership in 2006, Esperanza had to move and within months were able to lease a facility in Kensington. Esperanza began to serve patients there in December 2007 and has continued to operate at this site for over 11 years. In 2008, dental services were offered for the first time, with behavioral health services offered soon thereafter.

Decade Three: The Vision Is Established

In late 2009, Esperanza received a major federal grant award to build a state-of-the-art health and wellness center in the heart of the Hunting Park community at 4417 North 6th Street. This location, which opened in December 2011 as Esperanza's third site, is also home to Esperanza's administration and Department of Community Health and Wellness. With a vision to bring health care outside the exam room walls, many innovative new wellness programs have been launched over the past several years. Esperanza's Phoenix Café, located within the Hunting Park site, serves a menu of fresh, affordable food. Recently, the Department of Care Management was established to provide in-home follow-up for patients with complex medical needs. Over the past several years, with the start of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion, Esperanza has helped many uninsured North Philadelphians receive health insurance, for the first time ever. Esperanza Health Center has grown to employ 210 employees, and continues to be a model of holistic, urban, Christian community health care.

As of June of 2019—Esperanza's 30th year—over 14,000 patients are served per year from our three sites. More growth is expected in the future. In 2016 the former Kensington Trust Company bank building was purchased—a majestic structure on the corner of Kensington & Allegheny Avenues and across the street from the current leased site—to become Esperanza's new health center that will expand medical and dental services by 33 percent. An adjacent lot acquired from the city is the construction site of a new parking structure for patients and employees, and plans to build a community wellness center are underway. In the reflective words of Esperanza staff pediatrician, Dr. Chris Leander: "I appreciate being able to work at a place and with others who are helping to incarnate Jesus' love and to point all of us—our patients as well as each of us who works here—to our good Father." ***Truly, God has been faithful to Esperanza Health Center!***

Photos (top to bottom): 1) Esperanza opens its new Fifth Street site, September 2006; 2) Grand Opening celebration for the new Hunting Park site, December 2011; 3) Esperanza's Department of Community Health and Wellness is established, 2012; 4) Esperanza dedicates its new Dental Clinic expansion on the 7th floor of the Kensington site, Winter 2013; 5) The first Esperanza Volunteer Chaplains are commissioned, Fall 2014; 6) Esperanza staff gather to dedicate the new Kensington Health Center site, September 2018.





1989 - 2019

Esperanza Health Center

4417 N. 6th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19140-2319

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Compelled by the love of God in Christ Jesus, in cooperation with the Church and others, Esperanza Health Center is a multicultural ministry providing holistic health care to the Latino and underserved communities of Philadelphia.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Susan Post, D.Min, MBA



Add Your Photo to the Wall of Faithfulness Digital Mural!

Stephanie Soto of Philadelphia won Esperanza Health Center's artist competition for creating this painting (above, R) to celebrate 30 years of God's faithfulness. "**Por siempre, Dios es fiel**"—Spanish for "**forever, God is faithful**"—is the message expressed throughout the mural. The inspiration for the cards found in the mural comes from the "Wall of Faithfulness" established during the year 2000 (photo, upper L). Esperanza's diverse community of ethnicities and ages is represented by each hand holding a card. The center of the mural, which contains the symbols of the Trinity, represents God, who is also at the center of Esperanza's mission. The middle hand, holding up the "Dios" card, is Jesus' hand with the visible scar from when a nail was hammered through his wrist. The "Dios" card points to God the Father, with the dove sitting on it representing the Holy Spirit. The hand of Dr. Carolyn Klaus, Esperanza's founder, is holding up the card "fiel" to symbolize her faithfulness in carrying out the vision of Esperanza's early years. **Forever, God is faithful!** Upload your photos at: <https://mosaic.esperanzahealth.com/> (English) or <https://mosaic.esperanzahealth.com/?lang=es> (Spanish).