

Spring 2022

MESSAGE OF HOPE

A Newsletter of Esperanza Health Center

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Esperanza
Health Center



A LOOK TOWARDS THE FUTURE:

Programming at Esperanza's New Community Wellness Center

By: EHC's Community Health & Wellness Department

EHC's Community Health and Wellness Department is excited for the opportunity that our **Community Wellness Center**, scheduled to open in the summer of 2022, will provide to promote wholistic health in Kensington through preventive health and wellness initiatives. With a focus on addressing social determinants of health – defined by the World Health Organization as "non-medical factors that influence health outcomes," including food access, safety and housing – our hope is to respond to health inequities that impact our community. Given our history of health education, family programming, and exercise classes at our Hunting Park site, we plan to incorporate similar, relationship-driven programming at the new Wellness Center.

We are currently exploring community partners to invite into our space to share their community programs, in addition to offering our own. We hope this facility will be a place where one plus one equals three – resulting in something greater than what would be achieved on our own.

Programming under discussion includes: Zumba; yoga and other group classes; physical therapy; music and art enrichment activities; youth soccer clinics; and open gym nights for shooting hoops or playing ping pong and everything in between! We will be working with our partner organizations in Kensington (such as

The Simple Way, IMPACT Services, FabYouth Philly, MuralArts and Street Soccer USA) to ensure we are not duplicating services, but rather combining forces to address needs. In addition, our Operations Department will oversee a full fitness center and event space in the building, providing further assets for our neighbors and community members.

Programming will largely be determined through community input, including our CORE Action Team, which is a nine-member group of community residents who meet biweekly to speak into the center's development. EHC will also be hosting a series of community engagement workshops this summer that will lead to the design and development of a nearby vacant lot owned by EHC.

We hope that this new Community Wellness Center will be an inclusive space for Kensington families and community members, and that people from all walks of life will find a place of rest and rejuvenation, where community is created and nurtured and assets are lifted up.

If you are a community member, we invite you to reach out if you are looking for a space for a future event or program, or if you have ideas on how EHC can utilize this Community Wellness Center to better serve the Kensington community – please send us an email message at: wecare@esperanzahealth.com.

Q&A with Patrice Rogers, Kensington Community Leader

Patrice Rogers is a Community Connector with IMPACT Services and member of Esperanza Health Center's CORE Action Team – a nine-member group of community residents who meet biweekly to speak into the Community Wellness Center's development. She also founded **Stop The Risk**, an organization that focuses on street outreach and provides an outdoor, camp-based safe haven in Kensington for individuals at risk of addiction and homelessness.



HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE COMMUNITY WELLNESS CENTER OPENING SOON?

I feel really good about it because it's something different that the community needs! It's not a new apartment building. It's not a new development building. Esperanza is doing something different for the community – what we need here in Kensington. All neighborhoods don't need the same thing. [Esperanza] is bringing something to the community to be used for all: the residents, the community workers, the businesses. [They're] building a place where we can all feel safe enough to come to; a place for us to come to that feels like home. A place where we don't have to go to Center City or Northern Liberties, but it's here in our backyard. It makes me feel comfortable that I will be able to come down to the wellness center and have a safe place to be!

WHAT DO YOU HOPE THE WELLNESS CENTER WILL BRING TO THE COMMUNITY?

I hope the Community Wellness Center will bring respect and understanding for all people. I hope it can be a space where everyone can work together and a place where the doors will be open to all people. I want people to understand who the community is and who the residents are. I hope it will bridge a gap with [the community] and police officers so they can understand the community, the community can understand them, and so they can be included in things as well. I hope it will give people an area that is safe and clean. That this will give [community members] the chance to feel like they're part of something and give them something to work on and towards so we can take ownership over our streets and neighborhood again. The health crisis is really bad down here, so we have to work together on all sides if our community is ever going to work. I just want it to bring something different. I want it to bring diverse inclusion, understanding, and sympathy. I just hope the community center will bring so much love and respect to our neighborhood.

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WHEN DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

I really started engaging my community when the pandemic hit. My husband suffered from opioid addiction really badly. When he passed away last year, I wanted to understand his addiction, so I did that by getting involved in my community. I was tired of seeing on the news what everyone was going through, so I went down to Kensington [and Allegheny] to see [what I was up against]. When I got down there, I knew this was not just about opioid addiction – this was a community issue, too. From that day forward I knew [helping my community] was my calling and that I had to do something different. So I went to the local businesses and residents and just tried to get involved. I started cleaning up different lots with those that were being left behind and eventually people started to see how it was impacting lives. I just want everyone in the community, the residents, and different organizations to understand that we can all work together – you have to be a part of solving the problem, too, or there's never going to be a solution.

WHAT DREW YOU TO WORK WITH ESPERANZA'S CORE TEAM?

Esperanza is the only place where I feel like I have a voice and I can be myself and I feel like I'm home. This is the first time that who I am has not been downplayed. I feel accepted and like I'm on the same level as everyone else. I'm not just a community resident – I feel like I'm somebody and my voice matters here. Here, I was actually able to name [the CORE Action group] and it wasn't in vain. It was respected, represented and acknowledged.



WHEN SCRIPTURE LINES THE WALLS

During Esperanza’s Spring Retreat in March 2022, staff members were invited to tour the nearly-completed structure of what will soon become our new Community Wellness Center.

Donning construction hats and equipped with sharpies, each staff member had the opportunity to write scriptures on the beams of the building that would soon be covered up with drywall – a tradition that first began in 2011 with the construction of our Hunting park site, and continued with the construction of our Kensington site.

These scriptures serve as a reminder of the promises God has made to our neighborhood and our city. It brings incredible hope to all of us at Esperanza to know that the walls of this new building are lined with the Word of God. We are eager to see how God will use it to bless all members of our community.

A MURAL FOR OUR COMMUNITY

In April 2022, leaders from Esperanza Health Center, Mural Arts Philadelphia and IMPACT Services gathered at our Kensington health center site to dedicate the mural, "Keys to Change." The mural blends a floral background with camouflage and depicts a winding pathway that leads to a home. Collectively designed and painted by Phillip Adams and a group of military veteran artist assistants from the Kensington community, Keys to Change addresses the experience veterans have when reintegrating into the civilian community after service.

The mural resides on the side of our Hope House building on H Street between our Kensington health center site and our new Community Wellness Center. We are honored to house such a meaningful piece of artwork and are delighted by the beauty it brings to our community!



HELP US OPEN OUR DOORS TO THE COMMUNITY WELLNESS CENTER!

Your generous gift to Esperanza Health Center will enable us to give esperanza to our patients & community. Please consider becoming a "HopeBuilder" monthly donor to make a greater impact year-round! Make a gift today by visiting our website at: esperanzahealth.com/donate.

Or, please send a gift by check to: Esperanza Health Center, Attn: Development, 4417 N. 6th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19140.