



A PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTHY LIVING: A LOOK INTO ESPERANZA'S LIFESTYLE MEDICINE CLASS

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In the summer of 2022, Esperanza's Lifestyle Medicine Class began with a weekly gathering of 15-20 staff in the garden located behind our Hunting Park site, where I prepared a whole food, plant-based lunch and we talked about topics ranging from diabetes and sexual health to the theology behind plant-based nourishment. Since then, we have had several six-week cohorts leading up to the most recent group taught in Spanish that met for 12 weeks this fall, with a new group to start in January 2024. During our weekly sessions, we divide our time by demystifying a medical topic (e.g., arthritis, fibromyalgia, diabetes), followed by a time when I demonstrate a whole food, plant based recipe live. These recipes are inspired by what patients want to eat, while introducing more nutritious ingredients to support health and well-being. We also take time each week for light physical activity: moving, stretching, and getting our heart rates up!

Lifestyle Medicine is an evidence-based medical specialty that helps people prevent, optimize, and recover from the vast range of chronic diseases that plague an overwhelming proportion of our society today. The Lifestyle Medicine Class highlights the American College of Lifestyle Medicine's six pillars of health: 1) regular physical activity, 2) whole-food, plant-predominant nutrition, 3) restorative sleep, 4) stress management, 5) positive social connection, and 6) avoidance of risky substances. The goal of this class is to encourage a community journeying together to heal and to safeguard the wellness of our North Philadelphia community.

"I learned how to eat healthy, and it helped me understand how to improve my health."

- Participant in Lifestyle Medicine Class

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CADA MADRE: SUPPORTING EVERY MOTHER AND NEWBORN AT ESPERANZA

At Esperanza Health Center, we believe that every mother deserves the right to high quality prenatal care, to give birth with dignity, and to have what she needs to take care of her baby. In response, Esperanza has established the Cada Madre Fund, a fund that provides much-needed baby supplies – including car seats, strollers, breast pumps, diapers/wipes, and other essential items – and supports medical needs for mothers without health insurance and their newborns. The name Cada Madre (“every mother” in Spanish) was chosen to show that we are committed to meeting the needs of each one of our prenatal patients and their newborn children.

Daniela* has been a wonderful testament of the benefit of the Cada Madre Fund. After Daniela moved to Philadelphia from Central America during her third trimester of pregnancy, she learned about Esperanza through her mother, who was already a patient at the clinic. While this came with many uncertainties, she felt well supported by Esperanza throughout her third trimester. Although Daniela thought she had some time remaining to prepare for her baby’s arrival, her little one had other plans and decided to make his entrance early, at Daniela’s 35 weeks of pregnancy. Through Esperanza’s CONTIGO program, which matches bilingual doulas with uninsured prenatal patients, Daniela was connected to one of our doulas who helped her get the resources she needed...and quickly! With the support of the Cada Madre Fund, Daniela was prepared to bring her son home with essential baby gear and a grateful heart. She received blankets, baby clothing, burp cloths, a bathtub, a diaper bag, diapers, bottles, and a bassinet. She was extremely thankful for the items and especially for the bassinet, as she now has a safe place for her son to sleep.



Photo (L to R): Jalissa Garriga, Rosemery Perez, and Kayla Gonzales, Doulas at Esperanza Health Center.



Photo (L to R): Rebekah Weber, MSN, CNM, CRNP, Nurse Midwife with Kayla Gonzales, Jalissa Garriga, Rosemery Perez, and Magaly Hernandez, Doulas.

Through the CONTIGO program, Daniela also benefited from a postpartum home visit from Esperanza’s nurse midwife and one of our doulas. She loved this experience of postpartum care, which made it more comfortable and convenient for her. The Cada Madre Fund would not be able to make such an impact for new mothers and infants without the generous support of our many donors—we are grateful for your partnership!

*Patient's name has been changed to protect identity.

If you would like to make a gift to the Cada Madre Fund, please visit www.esperanzahealth.com/donate. We thank you in advance for your support!

DIEGO'S STORY: BUILDING FRIENDSHIP AND TRUST, DELIVERING INTEGRATED CARE

Diego* has a calmness around him, but his love for Esperanza beamed through his words as he boasted about the amazing care he has received at Esperanza since he first became a patient nearly four years ago.

After moving to Philadelphia a few years ago, he unfortunately began to experience significant health problems, and spent some time in and out of Temple University Hospital in North Philadelphia before starting dialysis treatment. It was there that a social worker recommended Esperanza Health Center to Diego. Walking into the Hunting Park clinic for the first time, he instantly felt welcomed. "People here are really nice and friendly," said Diego. "I feel happy coming here." Earlier this year, Diego began to see Esperanza's Nicole Groff, PA-C as

his primary care provider, with whom he immediately formed a friendship. Diego told Nicole of his ailments, including pain in his legs, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Nicole developed a detailed plan for Diego's care and encouraged him to make some changes including major changes to his diet. The results have been encouraging: his hemoglobin A1C measurement, a key indicator for diabetes, went down significantly, and he is now walking better with alleviated pain from his legs. Diego has also found some new favorite foods, while eating less bread and refined carbohydrates, which contributed to his diabetes. "Now I eat lots of steamed broccoli and cauliflower with fruit!" he joked.

"I trust her because she makes me feel good and well taken care of."

- Diego, patient at Esperanza Health Center

barriers, but thankfully for our Care Management team, healthcare team, and his motivation, he was able to overcome many of them, get his chronic problems under control, and seems a lot brighter overall. It's a pleasure to see him during his visits and he is very appreciative." said Nicole. Along with Nicole, Diego expressed his gratitude for Esperanza's Care Management Team, specifically Maria Victoria Concepción, who has served as his Community Health Worker: "Maria Victoria is always taking care of me; she accompanies me to all my appointments. She's like a mother to me!"

Nicole and Maria Victoria are just two examples of the compassionate workers at Esperanza Health Center—a place filled with individuals who not only excel in their roles but also follow in the footsteps of Christ by extending empathy and kindness to all they serve. It is their commitment to these values that makes our mission a reality. Though not a man of many words, the words Diego spoke about the care he has received at Esperanza ring volumes.

**Patient's name has been changed to protect identity.*



Photo: Nicole Groff, PA-C, Physician Assistant (left) and Maria Victoria Concepción, Community Health Worker (right).

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We want to create a place of hope and freedom where folks can enjoy a time of learning, fellowship, encouragement and community, while gaining an understanding of how human bodies function. The framework for this class comes from my training as a double board-certified Internal Medicine and Lifestyle Medicine physician. I also have a certification in plant-based nutrition from Cornell University and I am on the medical advisory board of the Center for Nutrition Studies.

"I appreciate that as a doctor, he knows what he's talking about and is interested in our health."

- Participant in Lifestyle Medicine Class



Photo: Dr. Daniel Chen preparing arroz verde with black bean, corn, and pickled onions (bottom, left).



An additional long-term goal is to expand the interdisciplinary, team-based approach to this class. In past months, we have regularly integrated with our Behavioral Health Consultants, and have collaborated with our Esperanza Fresh program that provides fresh produce for community members for several weeks each summer.

Teaching this class has been a real joy—especially to see bodies and spirits heal, and to witness excitement as participants joyfully share about the changes that they are inspired to make and that are transforming their well-being! I learn so much from their insights and observations, as they teach me about their customs and palates, their cultures and the lenses with which they view the world. It is truly a collaboration. I like to think of it as "native gardening." Together, we are learning what this community's soil supports and how to sow and grow such that a beautiful and sustainable ecosystem can flourish.

JOIN US IN OUR MISSION!

There are *many ways you can be involved in Esperanza Health Center's mission* to provide high-quality, comprehensive health care services, in Jesus' name, to the Latino and underserved communities of Philadelphia!

GIVE: Visit esperanzahealth.com/donate to make a secure, online gift.

SERVE: We're seeking qualified people who share in our Christ-centered mission to join our team. To view a list of current openings and to apply, visit esperanzahealth.com/careers. Interested in volunteering? Please visit our website to learn more about our available volunteer opportunities at esperanzahealth.com/join-us/volunteering.

PRAY: Thank you for your prayers for us as we seek to fulfill our mission.