



MESSAGE OF HOPE

FALL 2024

Hope Lives Here

Ángel's Story: A Young Patient's Path from Diabetes

The members of Esperanza's Care Management department are dedicated to supporting our patients with chronic conditions, collaborating with our clinical, behavioral health, social services, and other staff, to help each patient in their journey towards health and wholeness. Antonio Munoz, a Certified Community Health Worker in the Care Management department, recently shared about a young patient facing a chronic disease who has made some significant positive changes.

"In Esperanza's Care Management department, we work hand in hand with our dedicated providers and our wonderful patients, forming a 'trifecta' for better health. Working with all the unique individuals in our caseloads is a blessing. While every patient has their way of shining, we've recently had a few who have particularly stood out, each progressing at their own pace on their health journey."

"One patient, Ángel*, who has drastically improved, is a pediatric patient who has been struggling with Type 1 Diabetes. When we first received the referral from Ángel's medical provider to assist him in managing his diabetes, we noticed a disconnect both mentally and emotionally. This is to be expected from an adolescent who understandably just wants to live life without worry. We explained the severity of his condition and the potential outcomes if the proper course of action was not taken. A few months ago, after experiencing some of the side effects of his uncontrolled diabetes, we noticed a shift in Ángel's attitude and desire to not only make the necessary changes in his life to get better, but also his hopes to pursue schooling to become an Endocrinologist. In one of our home visits, he shared that he wants to help people who also go through what he has gone through. This drive has aided him in creating an amazing support system in his community and with the Care Management Team at Esperanza. Ángel now sees his school nurse daily and a home visiting nurse, who monitors his vitals and assists him in managing his diabetes. Words can't explain how amazing it feels to see a patient change their perspective of their health and give themselves a fighting chance. It's a beautiful sight to see!"

Said Missy Gudz, RN, Clinical Supervisor-Care Management, "My joy as Care Management RN is to see how we work in tandem with community health workers and other care management registered nurses in serving our patient's holistic needs—it is a joy to see medical, spiritual, emotional, and relational needs met with our patients and their beautiful families!"



Photo (L to R): Antonio Munoz, Certified Community Health Worker, and Missy Gudz, RN, Clinical Supervisor - Care Management

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

Phoenix Café Opens with a Fresh Start

After our Phoenix Café was abruptly closed in early 2020 due to COVID restrictions, this summer we reopened the Café at our Hunting Park and Kensington sites through new partnerships with two small businesses, Save the Last Bite and Taqueria Morales, offering healthy, delicious food options.

Save The Last Bite



Founded by Loan Nguyen, [Save The Last Bite](#) is a plant-based pop-up restaurant that blends Vietnam's culture, history, and flavors, nourishing both body and soul. Loan, who is originally from Vietnam and was raised in Camden, NJ, started Save The Last Bite with a passion for recreating nostalgic Vietnamese street food from her childhood. After a bout of food poisoning led her to question the food system, Loan embraced a vegan lifestyle, which keeps her cooking creative and meaningful. Her culinary journey began with vegan banh mi pop-ups in West Philly, and she now prepares new recipes at Phoenix Café's two locations. Said Loan, "I'm excited to introduce vegan, plant-based options to people, bringing a fresh new flavor palate. It's about offering a fresh, nutritious choice that's good for the body and introduces a whole new world of taste." Follow Loan's journey and culinary creations on Instagram at [@Save_the_lastbite](#).

Photo: Loan Nguyen serving Save The Last Bite's vegan curry to Esperanza's Young at Heart Seniors Group.

Taqueria Morales

Since the husband-and-wife team of Felipa Ventura and Melquiades Morales first opened their restaurant, [Taqueria Morales](#), in 2019 in South Philadelphia, they have taken pride in serving authentic Mexican comfort food with a unique blend of tradition and innovation. With a focus on fresher, healthier alternatives, they now bring their Mexican specialties to North Philadelphia at the Phoenix Café. Felipa's childhood in Mexico was steeped in the rich culinary traditions of her family, while Melquiades, who immigrated from Mexico to the United States in the late 1990s, honed his skills from the ground up, starting as a dishwasher and later mastering the intricacies of the kitchen. Despite the challenges of adapting to a new country, the Morales family has proudly brought the flavors of Mexico to Philadelphia, enriching the city's culinary landscape. Said Felipa, "I enjoy serving my community and am excited to reach new people and bring Mexico to them." Follow Taqueria Morales on Instagram at [@officialtaqueriamorales](#).

Photo: Felipa Ventura, co-founder of Taqueria Morales at Phoenix Café located in Esperanza Health Center's Kensington site.



New Volunteer Chaplains Join Esperanza!



Photo (left to right): Staff Chaplain Pastor Félix Castro; Zenia Torres, Ingrid Quiñonez, Juana Torres, Anthony Rojas (from Casa de Adoración y Restauración), María Rivera (from Iglesia Asambleas de Dios “Sión”), Janet González-Matla, Ivette Dávila-González, Andrés Rosado (from Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día “Maranatha”), Arnette González (from Spirit and Truth Fellowship); standing in back is EHC staff Chaplain Andrés Fajardo. *Missing from photo is trainee Eleainor Faia (from Make a Joyful Noise Ministry church).

We’re grateful to announce that last month, 10 new Volunteer Chaplains representing five churches participated in a three-day training at our Hunting Park site. Our Volunteer Chaplains serve Esperanza patients in a variety of ways, including: prayer and conversation about their spiritual lives; partnering with our staff to care for patients in practical ways; presenting the Good News of salvation through Christ; and, connecting them with local churches. They meet with patients at our three clinics, by phone, and also through visits to other medical facilities. Said Esperanza’s Staff Chaplain, Andrés Fajardo: “This group was filled with joy, good humor and sincere hearts—I’m eager to see how they can pursue their love for Christ and other people among our patients and community. Thank you, Lord!”

Colorectal Cancer Navigation Program

During the Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers (PACHC) Annual Conference this past October, Esperanza Health Center was selected to present data showcasing our Colorectal Cancer Navigation Program. This initiative, made possible through grant funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, led to significant improvements in our colorectal cancer screening rates among our African American patients. During the program’s initial pilot from June to December of 2023, rates for our African American patients seen for a visit during that time increased from 51.3% to 65% over 6 months. We are exploring strategies to maintain the growth that we saw during this pilot phase. We started this initiative after data showed that Esperanza’s African American patients had the lowest colorectal cancer screening rates among all our patients, similar to national data. According to the American Cancer Society, Black Americans have the second-highest rate of colorectal cancer and are often diagnosed later in life when the cancer is more advanced.

Our Colorectal Cancer and Diabetes Care Navigator, Ms. Darlene Burton plays a vital role. She makes phone calls to patients, encourages them to be screened for colorectal cancer, and shares about Esperanza’s many other services. Said Ms. Darlene, “Building relationships is key at Esperanza. By engaging directly with the African American community—a community that faces healthcare disparities—we aim to make life-saving screenings more accessible.”

Ms. Darlene’s journey in healthcare began as a Pennie (Pennsylvania Marketplace Insurance) ambassador, sharing information about state health insurance, and later as a COVID-19 ambassador at Esperanza, providing information about COVID-19 and vaccinations. Her passion for serving others comes from her personal experiences, having lost a cousin to childhood cancer and having both a son and grandson diagnosed with diabetes.

“Building relationships is key at Esperanza.”

- Darlene Burton, Colorectal Cancer & Diabetes Care Navigator

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Colorectal Cancer Navigation Program (continued from page 3)



The program has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the community. One patient said of Ms. Darlene, “You have a diamond, keep her.” Through Ms. Darlene’s efforts, Esperanza has now expanded the program to include outreach to all of our English-speaking patients.

With the success of the Colorectal Cancer Navigation Program, earlier this year Esperanza launched the Diabetes Care Navigation Program, a similar program providing focused outreach and care to patients with diabetes. Through a partnership with Drexel University’s Dornsife School of Public Health, Esperanza also hired a team of Lay Mental Health Workers to help to reduce the stigma of mental health in the community and to increase access to treatment. These programs reflect Esperanza’s ongoing commitment to reducing health disparities and improving the overall well-being of our community.

Photo (L to R): Christine Strickland, CRNP, Clinical Medical Director, Darlene Burton, Colorectal Cancer and Diabetes Care Navigator, Paris Ford, Temple University student, and Susan Post, CEO.

Introducing Esperanza’s New Tagline

This past summer, Esperanza’s Development department began working on a new tagline and logo, with a goal to reaffirm our ongoing mission. Our staff, patients, and community members, such as The CORE Action Team and our Young at Heart Seniors Group, provided valuable feedback, insights, and suggested taglines, all of which helped shape this outcome. In October, we unveiled our new tagline: **Compassionate Care For Everyone**. This new tagline serves as a daily reminder to our team to embody the compassion of Christ in every aspect of the care we provide at Esperanza, extending kindness, understanding, and healing to all who seek it. As a health center driven by faith, we are committed to mirroring God’s love through every interaction, providing comfort, care, and support to those in need. We hope you find this change as inspiring as we do!



Esperanza Health Center
Compassionate Care For Everyone

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.