

Fall 2021

Issue: 02

The
GOLDEN RULE

THE MAGAZINE OF HOAG'S COMMUNITY BENEFIT INITIATIVES



WOMEN'S HEALTH FIRST
A spotlight on good health

NAVIGATING TOWARD WELLNESS
Community Nurse Navigators Defined

SLEEP & MENTAL HEALTH
Obvious and essential

Message from the Director



Welcome to the fall 2021 issue of *The Golden Rule*, the magazine highlighting Hoag's Community Benefit initiatives.

In this issue, we focus on women's health — shining a spotlight on the proactive steps women need to take for both their physical and mental health, as well as the sometimes neglected self care that doesn't even make it onto a woman's radar. We also focus on our case management program and our exceptional community nurse navigators, two groups who really make a difference for those facing a serious health issue as they navigate the path back toward good health, as well as our growing list of tremendous partners who are helping us to accomplish even more.

When we began drafting the fall issue of this magazine, things were looking up. COVID numbers were down to their lowest point since the pandemic began, mask mandates were being lifted, and California was reopening. Life almost looked like it was returning to normal. Almost.

But then in late July, as the pandemic surged once again, everything changed. For the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living, that meant the five steps we had moved forward had us going

four steps back. Morale was challenged as variants produced anxiety among staff and community alike. Community programs offering assistance started to diminish yet, our informed and experienced staff remained resilient. We were grateful for all the programs we already had in place and the trusting relationships we had built with the community and our partner agencies.

We continue to move forward with a steadfast commitment to providing the best services possible for our vulnerable community. As always, we're deeply grateful for the amazing effort of all those who make the Center happen: our generous donors, Hoag leadership, dedicated staff, volunteers, and collaborative community partners. The teamwork of our dedicated professionals is what makes our success a reality.

We look forward to our continued ability to provide critical assistance to those in need.

With deepest gratitude,

Michael J. Rose

Michael Silva Rose, DrPH, LCSW
Director of Community Health and Community Benefit

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Women's Health First

Most women put their health last. They consider the care of their families first, and somewhere down the line (just after the dog, the cat, and the rabbit) they remember that without their good health, their families don't function.

Balancing a job, children, and home life often leaves a woman with little to no time for self care. As breadwinners, caretakers, and home-makers, women play a key role as the cornerstone of the home, which means that an investment in women's health pays off in big ways— for their own benefit and for the benefit of their families.

In this issue, we're shining a spotlight on women's health, the proactive steps women can take, the self care that should be a part of their lives, and how the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living can help.

Defining Women's Health

Women's health needs are not just limited to the reproductive years, rather, they continue throughout their lives. According to the Mayo Clinic, the top health issues for women in 2020 were heart disease, cancer, and chronic respiratory disease. While these diseases may sound common, they actually affect women in ways unique to the female body. Cancer in women frequently involves reproductive organs. Menopause, and its associated decline in hormone levels, raises the risk for other diseases, such as stroke, diabetes, obesity and heart disease. Stress and mental health challenges can adversely affect the body at any stage of a woman's life.

Good Health and Lifestyle Choices

Good health is not just genetic luck. Good health requires smart lifestyle choices such as a balanced diet, regular exercise, and access to medical care for regular checkups and screenings. In addition, lack of insurance and/or lack of resources can become an obstacle to obtaining necessary medical care.

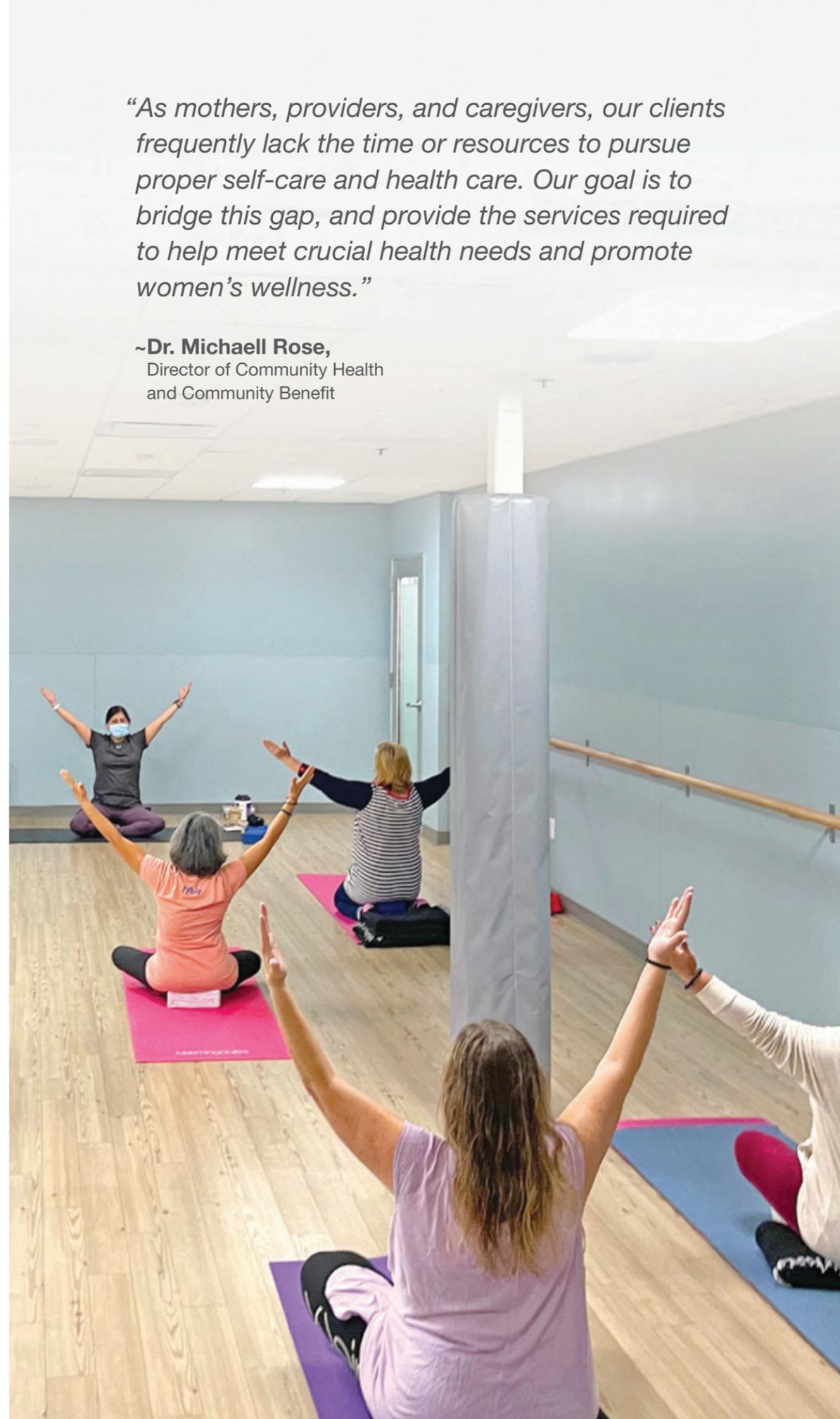
That's where the Center envisioned an opportunity to make a difference. The Center offers programs and services focused on improving the health and well-being of those in our community who are low-income and vulnerable. Many of the services and programs are tailored specifically for women, and are offered under one roof. Health and wellness coaching, mobile breast cancer screenings, yoga and exercise classes, and mental health services are some of the Center's free offerings aimed directly at women's health.

"As mothers, providers, and caregivers, our clients frequently lack the time or resources to pursue proper self-care and health care," says Michael Rose, director of the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living. "Our goal is to bridge this gap, and provide the services required to help meet crucial health needs and promote women's wellness."

A woman's investment in her own health yields benefits beyond herself. By refocusing our approach toward the unique needs of women, everyone benefits: families, children and the community. The Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living views an investment in women's health as a wise contribution to the health and well being of our community now, and into the future.

"As mothers, providers, and caregivers, our clients frequently lack the time or resources to pursue proper self-care and health care. Our goal is to bridge this gap, and provide the services required to help meet crucial health needs and promote women's wellness."

~Dr. Michael Rose,
Director of Community Health
and Community Benefit



Looking Back And Looking Forward

Each year, we look back at our accomplishments and we reflect, strategize, and applaud our hospital Board of Directors, our executive leadership and the generosity of our donors. And as we look back, we also look forward — to the needs of our community, to what more can be done to improve the lives of both individuals and families, to the many opportunities that lie ahead.

We're proud of our achievements and as always, strive to do more to meet the ongoing needs of the community. Following are brief overviews of the strides we made in key areas during 2020.

Mental Health Center

The Mental Health Center provides bilingual services to people who otherwise could not obtain mental health services. The majority of our clients are low-income, uninsured and highly vulnerable. During 2020, the program employed seven licensed and Master's prepared social workers who provided 4,162 psychotherapy sessions. We also offer general seminars open to the public, such as stress management, coping with mental health issues, relational skills and suicide prevention. Yoga and wellness classes are aimed at relieving stress and promoting good mental health, too.

Promotores

As ambassadors of good health, the promotores are a crucial link in navigating social and cultural barriers which might otherwise hinder access to community services for those in need. Building trust, raising awareness of health issues and as advocates, they serve as an invaluable link between the Center and the Community. During the pandemic, the promotores were especially helpful as they provided accurate health information and assisted with helping families

access much needed resources. 3,319 people were helped by promotores.

Project Wipeout

Prompted by a series of swim and surf-related beach accidents that resulted in serious injuries, a group of Hoag physicians and nurses created a program to educate the community about the importance of swim and surf safety. Originally developed in 1979 to highlight the dangers of spinal cord injuries while using our local beaches, the program has now grown into a nationally respected beach safety program, benefitting countless lives everywhere.

Covid Crisis Response Team

The pandemic has been challenging for us all, but especially so for those living with limited resources in high-risk situations, such as essential workers, the elderly and those living with extended families. The COVID Crisis Response Team, comprised of a registered nurse, a social worker, and a case manager, became a lifeline helping families navigate through the numerous issues related to having a COVID diagnosis. In 2020, we served 272 families with the COVID Crisis response team.

Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living

Since its opening in 2016, the MHSCHL has made a tremendous impact on the community, improving the lives of both individuals and families in need. The Center is a collaboration, bringing like-minded organizations and non-profits together in one location to provide an integrated approach to community services such as health care, legal aid, mental health support and food assistance for the underserved. We served 1,383 individuals through our Wellness Classes and 2,429 through our community education classes.



COMMUNITY BENEFIT EFFORTS

2020



10,678

Individuals Received Food Assistance



4,162

Therapy Sessions



1,383

Individuals Served Through Wellness Classes



\$7.2M

Community Benefit Grants



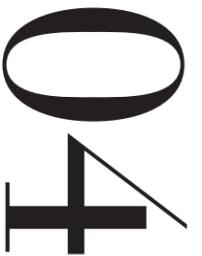
3,429

Individuals Served Through Case Management



2,429

Individuals Served Through Community Workshops



Focus on Mental Health

Mental health is more than just a psychological state. It encompasses our emotional and social wellness and determines how we think, feel and act. Our ability to function effectively is influenced by our state of mind. In short, our mental health is vital to our well being.

The Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living recognizes this vital link between good physical and good mental health. The Center offers free psychotherapy services to the community, providing support to those individuals and families who might not otherwise receive help. Staffed by a team of social workers, social worker assistants and

one part-time psychiatrist, the team works to break down social stigmas about mental health, helping patients learn skills to overcome challenges they face.

Many factors contribute to our positive mental health. Efforts to reduce stress and cultivate a good support system are helpful mental health strategies, as are other tactics within our reach. The following highlights the importance of sleep and gratitude, two positive mental health practices that are frequently overlooked.



Gratitude and Mental Health

The topic of gratitude seems to be everywhere. But does the hype live up to the practice? Does gratitude really make a difference to our well being, and if so, how?

In short, yes, yes, and here's the explanation. Gratitude contributes to happiness. Happiness contributes to better relationships. Better relationships lead to increased productivity and to good health.

The practice of gratitude is simple. It's a focus on appreciation for all things big and small. By regularly taking inventory of these bright spots, our perspective shifts as we acknowledge them. This deliberate practice can fill us with a sense of well-being, improving our mental health and ability to cope with stress. Practicing gratitude works because little by little, it changes the way we see situations and in turn, changes our thinking by shifting our focus.

And the more detailed we are with that appreciation, the better our brains respond. Positive stimulation causes the brain to release beneficial neurotransmitters which make us feel good. By making the effort to gratefully acknowledge specific details in that moment, such as that cup of coffee you just poured for yourself or the polite driver who smiled and let you pass, tensions ease as our brains learn to repeatedly seek that positive reward path.



Five simple steps to get started:

- 1. Just one.** Every night, reflect on just one single good thing that happened during your day.
- 2. Be specific.** Instead of being grateful for an entire weekend, be grateful for vintage Sunday morning music.
- 3. Focus on small details:** like the friendly neighbor who waved to you, or the color of the sky at sunrise.
- 4. Get personal.** Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
- 5. Acknowledge** even the smallest acts of kindness by others by saying "thank you."

Actively practicing gratitude is more than a feel-good concept: it actually changes your brain beneficially. Cultivating gratitude may take a little effort, but it's a habit that can pay off with a happier and healthier life.

Sleep and Mental Health

Sleep. It's often too little, rarely too much and on occasion, just right.

We all know that consistent, quality sleep is important. But what you might not know is that sleep is as crucial to our well being as food and water. The reason is simple: without regular good sleep, we cannot live and function optimally — physically, mentally, or emotionally.

For an adult, that means seven to nine hours per night. Growing teens need eight to ten hours per night. And school age kids average even more pillow time at nine to twelve.

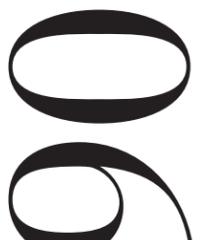
The benefits of sound sleep? If you're a kid or teen: there's a link between sleep and the hormone related to growth called GH, released during the restful phase of deep sleep; so slumber away and get growing. Our bodies repair when we're asleep. It's crucial for energy restoration, it boosts learning and memory, and additionally, it boosts our vital immune system.

The recent intrusion of modern electronics into our bedrooms hinders quality sleep. The blue glow of bedroom TV screens, laptops and ever-buzzing phones is disruptive and even detrimental to a good night's sleep.



Following are five tips for a better night's sleep:

- 1. Create your own wind-down routine.** One of the best ways to ensure a good night's sleep is to follow a routine conducive to relaxation. This could be as easy as dimming the lights an hour before bed, a simple breathing exercise, or a warm bath.
- 2. Unplug at bedtime.** Charge your phone and electronics overnight in another room. Try to resist that late-night Netflix binge.
- 3. Be consistent with your sleep schedule.** This means going to bed and waking up at a fairly consistent time. Set your alarm clock, even on weekends, to maintain good sleep and a circadian rhythm.
- 4. Chill.** The best temperature for sleep is 65 degrees. Our body temperature and metabolism naturally drops at night, so maintaining a cooler room supports good sleep.
- 5. Block out disturbances.** From noise to light to pets, turn it down and block it out.



Navigating Toward Wellness

A diagnosis of a serious disease or having to manage a chronic health condition can leave a patient feeling overwhelmed and wondering where do I go from here? Managing a health crisis, seeking the best course of treatment, and sorting through insurance options can be especially daunting upon discovery of an illness. Fortunately, our community is discovering that community nurse navigators can provide these crucial answers, compassionately guiding and supporting them along their health journey. Community nurse navigators help put patients back on the road to good health.

The Community Nurse Navigator Defined

A nurse navigator is a personal advocate for care, the liaison between the patient and the clinical care staff. Commonly found in specialty departments, but also involved in many other aspects of wellness, a nurse navigator can help a patient understand their diagnosis and the individualized care plan that follows, even to end-of-life care. Working with a nurse navigator, the patient feels both reassured and empowered, knowing that a medical professional is there to answer their questions and guide them through each step, helping them to make informed decisions, and to advise patients on available resources.

Nurse Navigators at the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living

Established in the Spring of 2021, the program currently employs two, and soon to be three, nurse navigators at the MHSCHL. Professional and caring, these RNs provide bilingual and bicultural services in English and Spanish. In

addition to their vital role in supporting and guiding patients during their health journeys, they also share a broader wellness goal for those who are looking for ways to improve their health, such as how to more effectively manage diabetes or obesity issues. Individual and group health coaching, education and RN case management are some of the ways that nurse navigators help clients create and attain realistic wellness goals. Our nurses also focus on health literacy, creating health and wellness workshops and programming to help prevent disease. In addition, our community nurses address access to care issues through care coordination, resource brokering, and health advocacy.

Julia Teal BSN, PHN, who helped to create the program, states that her part of the job is “working with clients in an unhurried setting which encourages clients to share from their hearts in turn promoting the trusting nurse-client relationship that leads to the healing of body-mind-spirit.” The patient experiences a psychological benefit knowing that they are not alone on their journey.

This program positively impacts the underinsured and uninsured community because it provides an opportunity to address health concerns that may otherwise go untreated. Julia Teal points out the value of the nurse navigators’ work, saying, “This ultimately and directly improves overall health status for the residents of Orange County. If this program is able to make one positive change within a household, the trajectory of that household is positively impacted for generations to come.”



“If this program is able to make one positive change within a household, the trajectory of that household is positively impacted for generations to come.”

~Julia Teal, BSN, PHN

MELINDA HOAG SMITH CENTER FOR HEALTHY LIVING



Case Management at MHSCHL

The Center has six full-time bilingual and bicultural case managers on staff who can facilitate direct communication and education or initiate a referral to one of our collaborative partner agencies. Expertly equipped, case managers work closely with our nurses, social workers, and partner agencies to efficiently guide clients toward the best outcome in the most efficient and effective way.

Whether assisting with a crisis or helping to manage an ongoing situation, the support

and guidance of an experienced case manager can make all the difference. As the partner and client lists grow, so does the need for coordination of care. With a comprehensive overview of each client's unique needs, along with a big dose of compassion, our case managers are able to provide warm hand-offs to both internal and external referrals through our nonprofit partner agencies. Closing the loop and making sure families get connected to quality resources and support can be life changing to those struggling to navigate the complex system.

The Crucial Link

When faced with a personal crisis, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Seeking out resources and support can be dizzying as there is usually little coordination of community resources and many barriers to accessing them. Where do you start?

Enter the case manager at the MHSCL, the guardian angel who can expertly and efficiently guide a family through a social, financial or other personal crisis. A good case manager makes a big difference for those facing serious struggles which can impact health and wellness. Skilled multi-taskers and fortified with knowledge, the MHSCHL case managers help reduce stress and improve outcomes for those needing additional resources and support.

The Process

Case managers are often the first point of contact for the client. Whether this initial introduction is in person or over the phone, the establishment of a warm and welcoming environment is key. Some clients seek help with a sudden, unexpected crisis such as loss of employment or loss of a loved one. Others seek out support for anything from health issues and rental assistance to homework support for their children. In every situation, the case manager's

non-judgemental approach and focus is on making each client feel like a priority and helps lay the foundation for a trusted relationship.

The Role of the Case Manager

The role of a case manager is a crucial link in the process of securing the help that clients need. After conducting an initial assessment of individuals or families seeking assistance, our screeners frequently identify additional needs, such as food insecurity, mental health issues or domestic violence situations. As experts in resource brokering and collaboration, case managers are able to connect the client to our programs and/or local partner agencies which can best address those needs, while monitoring that resources are being used in a timely and cost-effective manner. Case managers also set up regular food and diaper distributions, help clients fill out applications for rental assistance or legal aid, and register clients for fitness and wellness classes offered at The Center.

Sulamita: Profile of a Case Management Client

Sulamita was in the midst of her own health battle with cancer when the pandemic hit. Getting to her chemotherapy and blood work appointments put her at additional risk, making daily life that much more stressful. Unable to work, she was even too sick to care for her two babies. Sulamita's family of five suffered another blow when her husband lost his job due to COVID. They fell behind on rent and worried about having enough money for basics, like food and diapers.

Then, Sulamita connected with a case manager from the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living, who knew exactly how to help. Sulamita vividly recalls her first impressions of The Center, "Everyone was so attentive, so concerned about my health. That gave me hope and energy."

Her case manager was able to connect the family to rental assistance, which fully covered her rent, a huge relief for the family. Then, the case manager signed the family up for food distribution and diaper distribution programs, and was also able to provide a much-needed hand in the form of financial aid to Sulamita and her family. Additionally, the case manager connected Sulamita with our Community Nurse Navigator and with cancer support groups in her area.



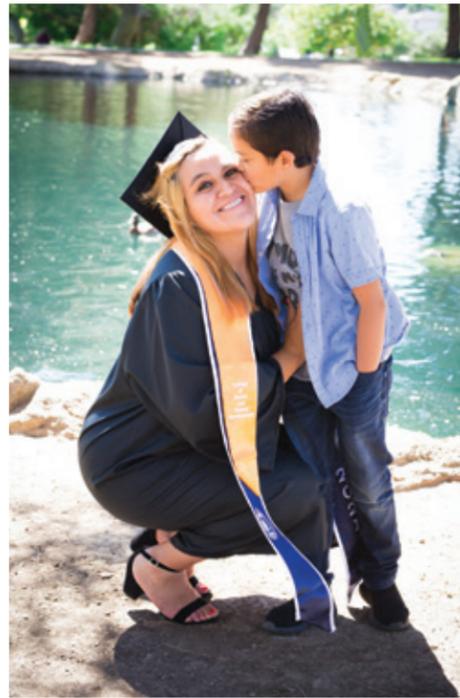
The assistance Sulamita's family received from The Center made a tremendous impact on their daily life. But to Sulamita, The Center's assistance was more than just economic relief; her heart is full of gratitude for her case manager's genuine care. "I will be forever grateful — I cannot express enough my appreciation for what you have done for my family during our darkest time of my health crisis."

Sulamita's case manager is happy to report that although she is still undergoing chemotherapy, her family is doing much better. Her husband has even been able to return to work.

Thanks to the efforts of our skilled case managers — and to the generosity of our donors — individuals like Sulamita are being positively impacted, as families are being offered critical resources, support, and hope.

Our Partners

Our partnerships with local organizations make the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living what it is today. We're truly grateful for the expertise they bring in specialties including women's health screenings, education, legal aid, cancer support, mental health support, and much more.



Project Self Sufficiency helps low-income, single parents get back to school and attain degrees. (Photograph: Mayra Novasky)



Cancer Kinship seeks to empower cancer patients through peer mentorship, individualized support and survivor education.



Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be smart, strong, and bold.



A dedicated **Girls Inc.** team leader.



Alinea provides mobile breast cancer screenings for low income women who otherwise would not have access to mammograms.



Newport Mesa Family Resource Center helped link children with much needed back to school supplies.



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and their Out of Darkness Walk strives to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide.



Community Action Partnership of Orange County helped to create and continues to manage the Diaper Bank.

*“We make a living by what we get,
but we make a life by what we give.”*

~Winston Churchill



The Life-Changing Power of Generosity

The famous British statesman understood a key point of generosity: how the act of giving changes the giver. Psychological studies confirm the positive consequences of generosity, including better overall physical health, higher self-esteem and enjoyment of deeper relationships. The unequivocal shift that the giver experiences is attributed to the awareness of the gift's impact. In short: the act of generosity actually changes one's life.

Of course, that life-changing experience impacts both donor and receiver. Which brings us to the immense gratitude we have for our donors — and the life-changing power of generosity that they have brought to the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living.

Through donor giving these past six years, The Center has been able to positively impact the lives of the needy and most vulnerable in our area. And as The Center has grown and

expanded its services, so too has the positive impact on the community.

When The Center opened in 2016, the goal was to meet the health and wellness needs of the underserved community. The facility was designed for more than 20 partner organizations to work together, and to provide individuals and families access to the services they need, all under one roof — from breast cancer screenings, to pediatric dentistry, mental health services, yoga and exercise classes, food and diaper distribution, rental assistance, legal aid, and more. All made possible by our donors.

Generosity is the reason behind The Center's ability to offer this wide range of critical services. Generosity has provided staffing, access to resources, and the ability to implement new and much-needed programs for the community. Generosity does indeed change lives, and the Melinda Hoag Smith Center for Healthy Living is undeniable proof.

**Please note that photographs in this issue were taken prior to and at various times during the pandemic and therefore, mask use is varied.*