

True community means supporting and encouraging one another. As a not-for-profit health care ministry, Providence Health & Services seeks to be a force for good in our communities as we reach out in response to people's needs for a better life.



regardless of their ability to pay, is the aim of this clinic that opened last April on the Tigard High campus. It's the 46th school-based health center to spring up in Oregon – and a premier example of community partnership.

Along with a dozen other partners, Providence has provided major support to create what Stochosky calls “a wonderful dream come true.” Providence Partners in Health gave \$220,000 from its community grants program to help plan the center and to remodel portable classrooms into a clinic complete with exam rooms, diagnostic lab and counseling office. Providence Health Plans is a major funder of Providence Partners in Health.

Stochosky and her medical/office assistant, Reyna Meneses, are employed by Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center. Mental health therapist Jeanni Etters is from LifeWorks Northwest.

True to its motto of “Keeping kids healthy, in school and ready to learn,” the health center opens its door to school district students of all ages, from kindergarten through the challenging teen years.

#### Helping Latinos lessen a risk

Together they sit at one end of the living room, brown-eyed baby Juan gazing from his highchair, his mother smiling out from her wheelchair. Maria Castellanos has gathered relatives and friends into her modest Aloha home this late-spring morning in hopes of sparing them the fate that has left her, for now, partially paralyzed.

Just three weeks earlier, 31-year-old Castellanos suffered a severe ataque cerebral – a stroke.

“She tells me, ‘I’m going to get better and I’m going to help other people,’” Lupita Marquez says with admiration. Marquez and three other Latina volunteer promo-

tores de salud – health promoters – have come this Saturday to teach Castellanos and her companions about stroke risk and prevention. Hand-drawn illustrations depict a “brain attack”; a rubber hamburger and pizza slice, attached to small tubes of the “fat” they contain, engage the children.

Castellanos invited the promotores into her home after her husband, Hugo, heard about Providence’s Parish Health Outreach Program. Trained by Providence staff, volunteer promotores serve in their metro-area parishes and in the community at large, offering health education and screenings for fellow Latinos. They also connect people to culturally appropriate resources.

On a warm summer day in 2007, more than 1,000 Latinos learned about stroke risk and prevention when promotores teamed with Providence Brain Institute to offer stroke education fairs in 10 local parishes. The fairs included screenings and hands-on

# Community Outreach

By Katherine Keniston • Photos by Jerome Hart

Providence gave more than \$145 million in total community benefits in 2007. These included not only free and discounted health care for patients in need, but also many other contributions to meet specific community needs, from hunger to health disparities.

How do we know these needs? Every three years, we conduct a Community Assets and Needs Assessment, personally visiting nonprofit organizations and service agencies across Oregon. We ask them about the most pressing needs they see among the people they serve. Then, we seek ideas for partnering with them to meet these needs. Our support may include a direct donation, a grant or a collaborative project.

Based on Providence’s most recent findings, we’re now focusing our community benefit outreach on four vulnerable

populations: low-income and uninsured persons, diverse populations, elder citizens, and those with behavioral health needs.

Supporting and encouraging one another in community is a powerful, ultimately personal commitment. Here are just two stories about special people we serve.

#### For students, a center of caring

A curly-haired freshman, his girlfriend beside him, comes through the door of the Tigard High School Health Center and plops into a recliner. “Well, sir, how are you?” nurse practitioner Margaret Stochosky calls out in a chipper voice. “Are you getting better?”

She knows that the boy sometimes doesn’t eat because his teeth hurt; that he suffers headaches for lack of the dental care his family can’t afford. Now she helps him line up an appointment for free care in a dental van.



During the next hour or so, Stochosky also will tend to a strapping senior with a bloody nose and to a slender girl, toting a plastic bag of pickles for lunch, who had an emotional breakdown.

“That’s what we want to do, make this a place where kids will seek out good information and feel comfortable, and be confident that their needs can be met,” Stochosky says of the new Tigard High School Health Center.

Providing easy access to primary health care and health information for all students,



**Opposite page:** “It’s such a gift to get to work with young people,” says nurse practitioner Margaret Stochosky (top), who cares for students such as Rickki Wick at the Tigard High School Health Center. (Bottom) Rickki’s friend Alysha Brannon (left) gets some assistance from Reyna Meneses. **Above:** Continuing her recovery from a stroke, Maria Castellanos cuddles her son Juan at home as supporters gather around. From left are her mother, Maria de Jesus Morales, and volunteer promotores Lupita Marquez, Elsa Rios and Clara Garcia. **Above, right:** The directors of Providence’s Parish Health Outreach Program, Adele Hughes (left) and Catherine Potter, display a colorful illustration of fruits and vegetables that serves as a teaching aid promoting a healthy diet, which can help prevent stroke.



activities. Latinos in this country have higher-than-average rates of obesity and diabetes – two risk factors for stroke – and suffer strokes at younger ages.

Maria Castellanos, a homemaker and mother of three boys, doesn’t know what led to her having a stroke at such a young age. She does know she appreciates all the help her new promotores friends have provided, including linking her up with social work services and arranging for transportation.

She also knows she has made progress and is feeling hopeful.

Looking at 7-month-old Juan beside her, Castellanos smiles with an insight. “We’re going to start at the same time learning to walk,” she declares. Her living room warms with laughter. ■