

Morris Heights Health Center: A staple in the community

By India Dansby

As one of New York's largest Federally Qualified Health Center's (FQHC's), Morris Heights Health Center (MHHC) has held a distinct reputation of being a trusted provider in the West Bronx and surrounding areas.

Since 1981, the health center has committed itself to improving health equity, eliminating health disparities, and delivering culturally sensitive care to families in underserved communities. Today, MHHC is the medical home to more than 57,000 patients annually. The health center provides a wide range of primary and specialty care services that are affordable and accessible to all patients regardless of their ability to pay.

Everyone has a right to affordable quality health care and community health centers have played an integral role in ensuring that," said Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia representing the 86th district that covers the Fordham, Mt. Eden, Morris Heights, and University Heights sections of the Bronx "Morris Heights Health Center has been a catalyst for change in the community for four decades

addressing the social and health inequalities that have plagued families in underserved communities throughout the Bronx for years."

MHHC is a health center marked by their legacy of being the first as well as an innovator.

The health organization was the first community health center (CHC) in the country to offer a birthing center in a low-income community; they pioneered a care model for HIV and AIDs services, which is now replicated nationwide; and they were the first FQHC in NYC to be accredited by the Joint Commission.

MHHC has since been recognized and accredited by the:

- the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as a Level III Patient Centered Medical Home

- the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) as a health quality leader, and
- the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for their Excellence in support of breastfeeding mothers.

Longtime patient, and Bronx resident, Julia F. has

seen firsthand the impact that the health center has made in the community. "There are many health organizations in the Bronx, but I continue to come to Morris Heights Health Center because they make me feel like family. I am a long-time patient of Dr. Bookhardt, Chief Medical Officer. For many years Dr. Bookhardt and I have been partners in my care. She listens and addresses my concerns and makes me feel confident in the care I receive."

Since the health centers establishment, they've been able to develop thousands of outreach initiatives and partner with over 500 local community-based organizations to meet the needs of the community. Some of their initiatives include free health screenings, education and workshops, coat drives, back to school giveaways, annual Christmas toy drives, Thanksgiving turkey vouchers and much more. MHHC has also partnered with local organizations to address food insecurities. Through the organization's philanthropic work, they have mobilized over \$50 million to aid the socioeco-

nomie growth of the communities in which they serve, enhanced their existing programs, and established a scholarship program for low-income college bound students in the Bronx. From 2013 to date, MHHC has awarded 133 scholarships totaling \$530,800 in financial support.

More than 30 years later, MHHC has evolved from a storefront location to a multi-site health system with over 31 locations that include 10 health centers, 1 urgent care center, and 20 school-based health facilities in the NYC public school system. Their school-based health program is one of the nation's leading programs offering a range of comprehensive health and social services to 17,000 patients annually from pre-k to 12th grade. Under the leadership of President and CEO Mari G. Millet, the organization opened its first urgent care center in the Burnside Jerome Tremont (BJT) district in May 2021. The center offers residents access to prompt and reliable care for urgent non-life-threatening conditions.

In addition, the health cen-

ter announced plans to expand their medical services into the Flatbush section of Brooklyn early 2022. The state-of-the-art facility will offer thousands of Brooklyn residents a range of services from family and adult medicine, behavioral health, nutrition, and a maternal health center of excellence.

"We are excited to connect Brooklyn residents to accessible and affordable quality care especially during these unprecedented times," said President & CEO Mari G. Millet. MHHC played a crucial role in supporting local community responses to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as expanding their efforts into neighboring boroughs that included Brooklyn. The health center administered thousands of vaccination doses in more than 100 locations.

Morris Heights Health Center is committed to continuing their legacy of designing new and innovative programs that foster socioeconomic growth for residents in communities throughout NYC that have the greatest need for support.

To learn more about MHHC and their philanthropic work in the community, visit www.mhhc.org

Mobile med outreach launched to battle substance abuse - Gov hails

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14 adone is a longstanding scientific approach to combatting heroin addiction. Combatting this epidemic should be the highest priority for State government. MMUs are an important effort to meet that urgent need."

Over the past several years, New York State has instituted an aggressive, multi-pronged approach to addressing the opioid epidemic, and created a na-

tion-leading continuum of addiction care with full prevention, treatment, and recovery services. To combat this epidemic, the state has worked to expand access to traditional services, including crisis services, inpatient, outpatient, and residential treatment programs, as well as medication assisted treatment, and mobile treatment and transportation services.

Governor Hochul was a member of the

NYS Heroin and Opioid Task Force, which in 2016, recommended new, non-traditional services, including recovery centers, youth clubhouses, expanded peer services, and open access centers, which provide immediate assessments and referrals to care. These services have since been established in numerous communities around the state, and have helped people in need access care closer to

where they live.

New Yorkers struggling with an addiction, or whose loved ones are struggling, can find help and hope by calling the state's toll-free, 24-hour, 7-day-a-week HOPEline at 1-877-8-HOPENY (1-877-846-7369) or by texting HOPENY (Short Code 467369).

Available addiction treatment including crisis/detox, inpatient, residential, or outpatient care can be found

using the NYS OASAS Treatment Availability Dashboard at FindAddictionTreatment.ny.gov or through the NYS OASAS website.

If you, or a loved one, have experienced insurance obstacles related to treatment or need help filing an appeal for a denied claim, contact the CHAMP helpline by phone at 888-614-5400 or email at ombuds@oasas.ny.gov.