

ST. MARY'S HEALTH CLINICS



St. Mary's Health
Clinics

AND THE NEEDS GO ON....

By Susan Gehlsen, Executive Director, St. Mary's Health Clinics

No one needs to be reminded of the disruptions that were caused by or related to the Covid 19 pandemic. Lives were changed, businesses were affected, education was challenged, and health care services were modified to adapt to the changing environment.

One group especially impacted by the many implications of the pandemic includes our friends and neighbors in the Latinx community, persons who have already faced many challenges in everyday life. The pandemic implications for this group were particularly severe, including contracting the disease itself along with the socioeconomic impact resulting from employment cuts and losses. Relationships are strained, family dynamics are altered, depression and anxiety are prominent as heard from patients by St. Mary's Health Clinics (SMHC) staff in the clinics and affirmed by mental health screening tools used in the clinic settings.

In order to address concerns and assist these families in recovery, available mental health resources for the Spanish-speaking community are severely limited in the Twin Cities area. How best might we respond to better meet their needs?

Through a grant received from the Partners in Ministry fund of the Ministries Foundation, St. Mary's is fortunate to have established a unique relationship with *Raices Sagradas*, a counseling service based in Minneapolis dedicated to the needs of the Latinx community. St. Mary's Health Clinics has



an agreement with this agency to provide one on one counseling services twice a week for patients served by the clinics. We are fortunate to have the services of Elizabeth Pulido Hernandez, MSW, a licensed therapist providing individual therapy to SMHC patients. Ellie sees patients at the SMHC offices and meets with patients individually.

Patients may come from any of the six SMHC clinic locations and are referred for services by physicians and/or nurses seeing patients in the clinics.

Ellie is a Latina woman, a native Spanish speaker and one who engages quickly with the patients due to their common language and cultural backgrounds. She is a graduate of St. Catherine University with a master's degree in social work. She works with patients addressing depression and anxiety and helping to heal from trauma. If medications may be necessary, Ellie works with the physicians and nurses to help support medication management.

This service addition began in February of this year and already there is a waiting list for patients to be scheduled. There is no doubt a great need to help address the multiple challenges faced by this patient population and every effort continues to increase the availability of these services for SMHC patients.