



Holy Family Services, Inc. Annual Newsletter & Report 2023



Directors' Notes

It takes perseverance, passion and genuine motivation to keep evolving and growing! Holy Family staff and community has been doing that for the last 39 years. For us, 2023 pushed Holy Family to evolve in ways we had not explored, and it opened so many new doors and opportunities.

In the last eight years I have served as Executive Director, we have worked diligently to help elevate the organization and to expand the capacities of all the services rendered by HFS but 2023 was especially remarkable. HFS partnered up with UTRGV School of Medicine to be a OB/GYN clerkship site for their medical students. Giving medical students the chance to get a hands-on experience of both midwifery and birth center models of care, has given us the capacity to enhance women's healthcare in practices outside of our organization. Furthermore, we have also worked towards the expansion of our clinic services, including the Mobile Clinic, for at-risk and under-served communities in the RGV. This project, first established in 2019, has created collaborations with other recognized non-profits to improve continuity of care and has already garnered funders attention for the unique approach to collaboration and direct access to healthcare services for our most at-risk communities in the Rio Grande Valley.

Another notable achievement for 2023 was the partnership with BCBS of Texas - Maternal and Infant Program. The funding from this program elevated our capacity as an organization to enhance our overall maternal care from preconception to postpartum. This partnership gave us access to begin other collaborations, including Vitamin Angels. With Vitamin Angels, we are now able to provide expectant, maternity and breastfeeding clients free prenatal vitamins to improve maternal health and birth outcomes. A second partnership that developed was with Centering Health Institute. This partnership has laid out the foundation for future services, the first of its kind in the Rio Grande Valley, that will have a definite positive impact on the community we serve. Centering Pregnancy is group prenatal care model that brings women due at the same time out of exam rooms and into a comfortable group setting. This model of care decreases the rate of preterm and low weight babies, increases breastfeeding rates and leads to better pregnancy spacing. We look forward to establishing this model of care and expanding on our mission of providing holistic women's health care services to families we serve.



Sandra de la Cruz-Yarrison
Executive Director

As the Executive Director, I had the honor being selected as a member for the Nonprofit Leaders of Excellence, Inaugural Class of 2022-2023, by Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation and Knapp Community Care Foundation. This elevated not only our leadership abilities but enabled our organization to grow in so many capacities. Holy Family continues the journey of evolving in innovative ways to better serve our community. As Executive Director, I am driven by a strong determination to leave a legacy of impact and service in the Rio Grande Valley community that I call home.



Kate Plummer, CNM
Clinical Director

I arrived at Holy Family in the late evening of December 23rd, 2021, after driving from Vermont with my friend Jay in my vintage Mitsubishi van. The trip took 5 days of driving, and we stopped along the way to see friends for an early Christmas celebration, and camped on the beach at Sea Rim State Park just after crossing from Louisiana into Texas. When I got to Holy Family, I had no idea what would happen, or how quickly I would come to love the people I worked with, cared for, and befriended in the Rio Grande Valley. I came to Holy Family to re-enter full-scope midwifery practice, after not having attended births for over 10 years, and I expected that I would only stay for a 6-9 month fellowship. Instead, I stayed on as a staff midwife, and then served as Interim Clinical Director for another year. Now, as I pack my boxes and prepare to leave after more than 2 years here, I am full of gratitude for what has been one of the most fulfilling and challenging chapters of my life, and sadness to leave this place I love.

It is remarkable that Holy Family has now been in existence for 40 years, when so many birth centers around the country have only managed to flourish for much briefer periods. In my opinion, the fact that Holy Family has survived this long is due to the dedication and sacrifice of the people who work here, and to the faith that our patients and their families have in us. So many midwives and other birth workers have made their way through HFS over the decades, and so many seeds of gentle, holistic, patient- and family-centered birth and healthcare have been planted and nurtured here. As we develop new programs like the mobile clinic, we are impacting healthcare for the entire Valley, and it is a big responsibility. It is my hope that we will find a way to keep expanding the midwifery model of care in the RGV, and that we will do so while also building a sustainable staffing model that will keep midwives and nurses here for the long term. May we celebrate in another decade the 50th anniversary of HFS with even more sense of accomplishment for what has come before, and excitement for what the future brings.



Staff

Executive Director-

Sandra de la Cruz-Yarrison

Office Manager-

Jessica Rojo, MA

Administrative Assistant-

Marylú Castillo, MA

Front Office Assistant-

Andrea Romero

Billing Coordinator-

Elizabeth Reta

Billing Assistant-

Ruby Cavazos

Outreach Coordinator-

Jessica Pohl

Housekeeping

Supervisor- *María Peña*

Housekeeping Specialist-

Damiana Becerra

Groundskeeper-

Martín Torres

Promotora de Salud-

María Gomez

Practice Manager-

Brandi Kennedy

Clinical Director-

Kate Plummer, CNM

Certified Nurse Midwives-

Simone Payan, CNM

Annie Leone, CNM

Anna Haas, CNM

Nurses-

Lori Gonzalez, LVN

Clothilda Johnson, RN

Ana Lopez, RN

Lactation Consultant-

Jessica Sargent Flores,

IBCLC

Staff Highlights

Damiana Becerra- Housekeeping **23 años de servicio**

Empecé mi trabajo aquí como voluntaria después del nacimiento de mi nieto en Holy Family. Luego agarré mi posición de limpieza hace 23 años. Mi trabajo incluye limpieza de la clínica y las casitas, lavandería, preparar los layettes y a veces ayudar con el banco de alimentos. Me encanta especialmente preparar los layettes para los bebés. Estoy agradecida por la oportunidad de trabajar en Holy Family. Valoro que todos aquí son tan amables y dedicados a hacer la experiencia lo mejor que puede ser para las familias que vienen aquí.



Anna Haas, CNM- Midwife **2.5 years of service**

I've been working at Holy Family for two and a half years. The work has been fulfilling for me as a midwife. I've had the opportunity to work with supportive coworkers and lovely clients, both at the birth center and at the humanitarian respite center. It has been rewarding to work with clients to improve their health and to see them satisfied with their care.

Jessica Rojo, MA- Office Manager **12 years of service**

I began my time at Holy Family 12 years ago when I was working on hours to complete my RMA. Following that, I came on board as an Americorps member, and eventually began working as a permanent staff member. Twelve years later and I now serve as the Office Manager. I love how as staff we always try to help others in many different areas of life, not only through pregnancy. I love being able to give support to our patients whether they are walk-ins or regular clients. And I value the fact that providing education is such an important part of what we do for the community.



A Few of Our 2023 Babies



Well Woman Care

- Annual gynecological exams & routine screenings
- Preventative screenings
- Breast exams
- Pap smears

Prenatal Care

- An initial visit with history, assessment, exam, & education
- Prenatal visits with time for questions
- All visits attended by a CNM
- Free birth classes
- IBCLC Consultations available

Childbirth Services

- 24/7 Access to a Midwife
- One-on-One Care
- Freedom of Movement
- Intermittent Monitoring
- Skin to Skin
- Very Low transfer rate
- Water birth option
- Doula friendly
- No restrictions on support people

Postpartum

- Immediate & uninterrupted skin to skin
- Average 6-8 hour postpartum stay at the birth center, option to stay up to 24 hours
- 2 home visits for mom & baby
- Breastfeeding support from an IBCLC



2023 Client Statistics



2,351 Total Client Visits Conducted
219 Expecting Moms Cared for at HFS
35 First Time Mothers Delivered

90 Vaginal Births at our Birth Center
5 Hospital Births Attended by HFS CNM
0% Preterm Birth Rate
1.19% Episiotomy Rate



3,831 Families Served from our Food Pantry
60 Free Classes Provided to the Community
12 Free Carseat Inspection Clinics Offered



95% Breastfeeding Rate at Discharge
35 Lactation Consultations Conducted

155 Free Pregnancy Tests
395 Mobile Clinic Visits
1,145 Humanitarian Respite Center Visits



Additional Programs



Mobile Clinic

Our mobile clinic operates every Wednesday at various colonias with a focus on serving predominantly uninsured and underinsured clients in the RGV. Services include: health screenings, testing, well-woman exams, educational classes and more.



Food Pantry

Our food pantry which is part of the larger Rio Grande Valley Food Bank system serves 400+ families each month. Families with proof of a US address may apply to receive one monthly box with a variety of nutritious food options including protein, canned goods, produce, dairy, and dry goods.



Monthly Classes

We offer a variety of classes on a monthly basis. All are free and open to our clients as well as the public. Topics include: child birth (offered in both English and Spanish), breastfeeding, and a maternal mental health group (in collaboration with HOPE Family Clinic).

Nutrition Consultations



Our clients have the option to attend consultations from a contracted dietitian at no charge to them. This service supplements the care they receive with us and is an important part of our holistic approach to healthcare.

UTRGV Medical Students



We partner with UTRGV Medical School to provide third year students with the opportunity to complete their two-week obstetrical clerkship at our facility. Students observe birth and women's healthcare outside of a hospital setting.

Photo below by: Sojourning Birth



Car Seat Inspections

Once per month we offer free car seat checks to the community. Our two certified technicians on staff verify children are in the correct type of seat, guide caregivers in making adjustments for a secure fit, and instruct on correct vehicle installation.



Lactation Consultations

Once a week an IBCLC is available to offer support with breastfeeding. This service is free and open to the public. Any nursing mothers may schedule private appointments through our office with no cost to them.



Vive en Salud

Once a month we host educational programming about nutrition, exercise and healthy lifestyle. These programs are free and open to the community. Participants also have the opportunity to check their blood pressure and blood glucose at each event.



Birth Stories



Luna Ramirez

I found out at 6 months in, I was pregnant. I chose to try and have another natural birth at the birthing center this time around. My midwives watched my health and baby's health carefully due to having gestational diabetes. I was a little past my due date and it wasn't ideal for me to go past one week over.

On February 21st, I labored for the most part at home. Contractions started at 2pm, and around 6pm I arrived at the birthing center at 6cm dilated, everyone from my support group arrived as well and we were a full house! I started using my ball and some other methods to help relieve the pain, about 8:30pm I got into the tub. I was feeling some contractions but nothing too crazy and I got a feeling of pressure. I decided to get out of the water for a bit. As soon as I stepped out of the water I had contraction all the way up my back to my neck that let me know it was time. My midwife, Amy, came in to check me and let me know I could push when I was ready. After about 20 minutes of encouragement and motivation from my doula, husband, mom, sister and birth photographer, baby boy arrived at 9:56pm!

I couldn't imagine not having the support of my doula, family and most of all, my midwives.

© bekathedoula

Tanasia Paige

Mason Edward Harris is here--7pounds 2oz, he was not playing! I was in labor for one hour from the time my contractions started until the time he started crowning. I almost had him outside the birthing center. Holy Family Services, Inc. thank you all for acting fast, having everything prepared, and safely helping me to deliver my son on such short notice. Words cannot express how grateful and thankful I am for y'all to show up for me when I called at 2:23 in the am. Thank you!



The Graf Family

We thank God for the safe arrival of little Adalyn. Some of the amazing team from Holy Family Services, Inc. stopped by to check up on baby and Katharyn. Eight of our ten children have been born there and Annie (midwife at right) has been present for three or four of those.



Fall Festival

This year we hosted our 2nd annual Fall Festival in October. The event was planned with families in mind and included: rides for various age groups, moon jumps, live music, folkloric dance, vendors, concessions, trunk or treat, a costume contest, face-painting and pumpkin painting.



The festival brought in families, donors and participants from throughout the RGV who came together to support Holy Family and enjoy the festivities on a beautiful fall day. The proceeds from the Fall Festival were put towards re-paving of our driveway and parking lot. This project provides safer entry and parking for our staff and clients. We plan to continue Fall Festival tradition in 2024 and years to come, using what we learned to make future events even more successful in raising funds to support HFS and the women and families we serve.

Continue Your Support



PayPal

Use PayPal to direct your donation to one of the following programs:



Food Bank



Sponsor a volunteer CNM



Sponsor a family



General donation

Donate with the button at www.holyfamilybirthcenter.com 100% of those funds go directly toward supporting our mission.

Checks payable to:
Holy Family Services, Inc.
5819 N FM 88
Weslaco, TX 78599



www.holyfamilybirthcenter.com



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Board of Directors

President- Mari de Hoyos

Vice President- Frank de Hoyos

Secretary- Kathryn Gomez

Barbara Z. Ceres

LuBeth Perez

Norma E. Hess

Jennifer Gabler, CPM



HFS Board of Directors (left to right): Mari De Hoyos, Kathryn Gomez, Barbara Z. Ceres, Frank De Hoyos, and Norma E. Hess (not pictured: LuBeth Perez & Jennifer Gabler)

Grants

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas
Knapp Community Care Foundation
Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation
La Madre de los Pobres
The John G. and Marie Stella
Kennedy Memorial Foundation

Greetings! The Board of Directors would like to wish the best to all the clients who came through our doors in 2023. We hope you have felt the love and care there that drew all of us to serve at Holy Family.

Additionally, we are so thankful for our medical team, office & support staff, other volunteers, and donors. Because of you, Holy Family continues to provide wholesome experiences to families in our communities. We know that birth work is challenging, and we simply cannot thank you enough for every effort you pour into this wonderful place. We hope to continue working side-by-side with all of you in our effort to help Holy Family succeed in its mission.

Within the past year, HFS BOD has worked to expand its membership with representatives from diverse disciplines, such as public health, CEOs, and fellow maternal support professionals. We plan to execute multiple fundraising projects within the next year and cannot wait to help Holy Family continue to grow and flourish.

-Holy Family Services Board of Directors

