



LA MAESTRA
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
City Heights - El Cajon - National City - Lemon Grove

La Maestra - Heart
of the Community Campaign



WELL-BEING Update

Volume ONE - ISSUE 6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009



Zara's Message

Dear Friends,

Happy Holidays! Before we take some time to spend with our friends and family, I want to thank you all for your continued support of La Maestra. This year has been a wonderful demonstration of what a small group can do with the right support and healthy amount of determination. I am happy to share that our 34,660 sq. ft. "green" healthcare center is more than seventy percent complete.

Thanks to the generosity of our community partners, our holiday gift distribution project is currently underway at each of our health centers. We expect very large crowds this year. Last year, we reached more than 4,500 people. In this issue you will see pictures from our celebration at our center in El Cajon.

Last issue, we highlighted our microcredit program, now we focus on highlighting one of our standout participants, Rocio, who creates beautiful handmade crafts and has started a successful business. Please read more about how this program is helping so many women in City Heights as well as others in San Diego communities.

La Maestra keeps growing. We opened a new satellite health center in Lemon Grove, the first of its kind in the community. We were very fortunate to have State Senator Christine Kehoe, Assemblyman Marty Block, Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Councilman George Gastil, and Asia Powell with Verizon joining us for the celebration.

Mark your calendars for our 20th Anniversary Celebration, May 5, 2010. Look for a Save the Date coming in January. I hope you will be able to join us and help us celebrate.

A special thanks to those who continue to support our Heart of the Community Capital Campaign, your generosity will help us reach our goal and in turn will benefit our patients and clients. On behalf of our team at La Maestra, have a wonderful holiday and Happy New Year.

Healthy Regards,
Zara Marselian

Happy Holidays
and Wishing You a
Prosperous New Year!
From All of Us at
La Maestra
Community Health Centers

LA MAESTRA'S MICROCREDIT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

A Place to Find Inner Talent and Business Savvy - Rocio's Story

Nearly three decades ago, Rocio was working as a nurse in Mexico. Looking for better opportunities, she came to Los Angeles, where her family operated a restaurant and market for the past 24 years. About 2 years ago, Rocio suffered a stroke that left her disabled and she decided to move to San Diego to keep her family intact and regroup. Her monthly disability check did not provide enough to support her family so she wound up homeless sleeping in her truck.

Walking through the neighborhood in City Heights, Rocio heard a group of women chatting. Always curious, she listened closely and at the end of the meeting, she introduced herself to Elena, the program director and asked for more information. Elena explained how women can qualify for loans to help them start a business in La Maestra's Microcredit Program. She advised Rocio to come back the following week to learn more.

Rocio didn't lose any time. She started dreaming of what she could do to turn that small loan into a profitable business. At the next meeting, she presented her plan to start a business with a \$250 loan. She had already investigated where she could find household items and clothing for a very low price and resell them. After receiving the loan, she started to do just that, selling some days in San Ysidro and some in Tijuana, and was able to make her weekly loan payments and earn a bit to feed her family.

Soon after Rocio received her loan, she secured housing for her and her son, with the help of some women in the Program. Rocio has three children: her son, who will be graduating from Hilltop High School this year; a 15 year old daughter with special needs who attends the California School for the Deaf in Riverside; and her 28 year old daughter who is working on her Masters degree in Special Education, specializing in American Sign Language.

Rocio and other women in the group who do handicrafts share their ideas. Rocio's knitting skills are amazing, which can be seen in her beautifully knit scarves, slippers, and bags. She is constantly dreaming of new designs and ideas, and says some nights she will wake up with a new idea and her hands will start working right then. She makes stylish purses from recycled "trash," such as soda can tabs and old Dorito bags turned inside out, folded and woven together.

Rocio's business sense and experience was instilled in her since childhood by her father: "He always told us, 'Even if you sell *chicles*, always work for yourself.'" Over the last year and a half, Rocio has successfully paid back loans of \$250 and \$500. She is about to receive her second \$1,000 loan and looks forward to employing other women to help fill her growing number of orders for custom



Rocio displays her handmade crafts.

designs. Rocio sells her products at fairs and flea markets and through sales opportunities organized by La Maestra with the help of the Foundation for Women, ACCION San Diego and the University of San Diego.

Rocio describes how the support offered in this program has transformed her: "When I started coming to the meetings, I dressed very poorly and didn't do my hair or makeup. But this program has allowed me to recover my self-esteem and the person that I used to be. Now I wake up each day and am excited to get dressed in nice clothes and take time on my appearance."

Many of the women in her weekly group have had the same experience, and some have even turned what they've learned about health and nutrition into their own businesses. With their advice and support, Rocio says she has been able to lose fifteen pounds and counting. When showing off a drink holder made from can tops and turquoise thread, she proudly explains, "It's perfect for a soda can or bottle, but I don't use it for that now. I use it for water."

Rocio hopes that more women can be given the opportunities and the support to regain their health, pride and passion for life that she found in the Women's Microcredit Program. "All women have skill and talent like mine. They just need the chance to find it and develop it, which this program provides."

SAVE THE DATE!

May 5, 2010
for the

**20th Anniversary
Celebration**

of La Maestra
Community Health Centers

La Maestra Keeps Growing

Grand Opening of First Community Clinic in the City of Lemon Grove

La Maestra's Executive team and Board of Directors are joined by State Senator Christine Kehoe, Assemblyman Marty Block, Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Lemon Grove City Councilman George Gastil and Asia Powell, Director of Strategic Programs for Verizon; along with community partners and local residents to celebrate the opening of the newest health center satellite. With this location, La Maestra continues to expand its culturally competent health care and education services to meet the unique needs of the under-served, ethnically diverse communities of San Diego.



Cutting of the "ribbon", prepared by local elementary school students.

LA MAESTRA CIRCLE OF CARE FOUNDATION SHARES WEEK LONG HOLIDAY CELEBRATION WITH COMMUNITY



La Maestra Circle of Care Foundation in partnership with La Maestra Community Health Centers is distributing more than 6,000 toys and gifts to San Diego families during the 2009 holiday season. Gifts are distributed by Foundation and La Maestra staff at La Maestra Community Health Centers located in City Heights, El Cajon, Lemon Grove and National City.

Toys and gifts were donated to La Maestra from various national, regional and local companies and organizations. "We would like to thank all of our partners that contributed to the holiday gift distribution," states Zara Marselian, CEO of La Maestra. "A special thanks goes out to Marshall Eklund Pilates Studio, who adopted La Maestra for the holiday season and held several special events to encourage their clients and friends to donate toys, collecting over 200 fun toys that have brought big smiles to many children. They are a wonderful example of what a local company can do to make a positive impact in the community."

Foundation and La Maestra staff collect donations year round. If you would like to make a donation of a non-perishable food item, clothing or books, please contact Lindy Webb at 619.717.1866 or lindy@lamaestra.org.

La Maestra Circle of Care Foundation was formed in 2007 to provide a funding mechanism to exempt organizations providing community services to low income individuals in San Diego. The types of community services the Foundation supports are healthcare, job training, education and housing assistance to low income individuals. The Foundation has made its first grants this December.



La Maestra Builds Green ~ Construction Update



Sparks fly in the first floor reception area of La Maestra's new health center.



Members of La Maestra's Capital Campaign Team are all smiles in front of the new building.



La Maestra's "green" construction team has followed an aggressive recycling program throughout the project.

Please Give to the La Maestra Heart of the Community Campaign

How can you **make a difference** in the lives of families and the community?

Donors like you are making a difference by contributing to the construction of our new green Gold LEED healthcare center, purchase of new medical equipment and to new programs.

We invite you to make your donation today at any level to help us complete this exciting milestone campaign for City Heights and our region. Your support touches the lives of so many families and helps us to build a healthier community.

Please make your contribution by contacting Lindy Webb, campaign assistant at 619.584.1612 Ext. 3032 or at lindy@lamaestra.org

*We would like to acknowledge our
La Maestra Heart of the Community Capital Campaign Green Vendors*

**CMS Mechanical • Newmatic Engineering • Powersmiths
San Diego Gas & Electric - Sustainable Communities**