



Nancy Liechty Loewen
Women's Health

I first began volunteering at Center for Healing and Hope in 2016 where I found caring and engaged people providing health care in a less than ideal environment. The Plymouth Church was wonderfully generous in providing basement space, but it was not cheery, well-lit or easily accessible. **While I was impressed with the dedication of the staff and volunteers who were attending to many health care needs, what I saw lacking was preventative health care and continuity of care.**

Years ago, I did a 3-year MCC term in Kingston, Jamaica at an urgent care clinic in a very impoverished neighborhood. We worked hard to address health care needs more proactively and developed programs for immunizations, family planning, and monitoring of hypertension and diabetes. **I wondered if CHH could also move in that direction.** When Dr. Michelle Shelley came on board, that is exactly what happened. She saw the enormous need for diabetic care in the Latino community and also, a lack of immunizations and women's health care. **A chronic care program was initiated and utilization of the BCCP/Wise-Woman program was incorporated to better serve patients.** BCCP/WW (Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention) is a federal program that pays for non-insured, low-income women to have free Pap smears, breast exams and mammograms per national guidelines. It also provides screening for diabetes and high

cholesterol for women over 40 and access to nutrition and health education.

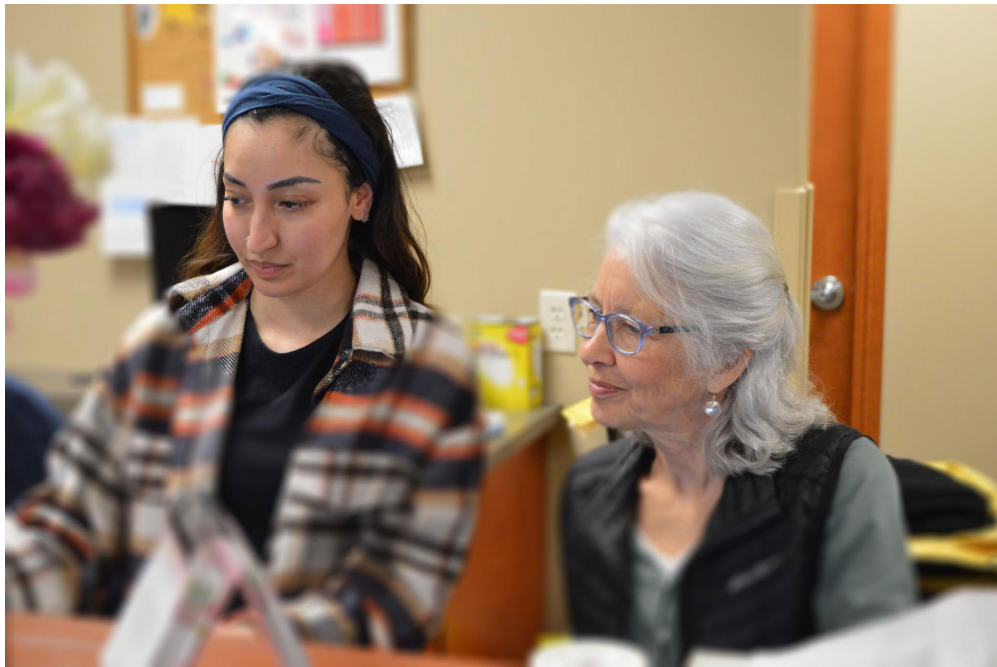


Nancy poses with a group of fellow volunteers at a COVID-19 vaccine clinic at CHH in 2021 where she worked with a team to provide 162 doses of the vaccine or booster during the three hour pop-up clinic.

As a nurse midwife I'm trained in obstetrics and women's health care. In 2019 when I was teaching women's health to nurse practitioner students at Goshen College, we were able to bring students to CHH to participate in providing BCCP care. Dr. Shelley then asked me if I would become a regular volunteer provider to do BCCP/WW. I have been primarily working with the BCCP program since then – (oh, except for the 2 years of doing Covid 19 testing!) – and I think it's a wonderful program. **Many of the women I see have left their homeland, often under duress and have had interrupted or no gynecologic care.** Others have lived here many years but have limited access to health care. These women are grateful to be able to get services provided under BCCP/WW. They are also grateful to see a women's health provider who can answer sensitive questions and address such areas as infertility, contraception, hormonal issues and infections.

When I have a clinic day, I mostly see Latina women. They come from different countries and many have heartbreaking stories of loss, separation

and trauma. In the course of a visit (with the invaluable help of Diana, who is an MA and my interpreter) I may learn of an abusive situation, lack of clothing, untenable living situation or estrangement from family and extreme loneliness. In the newly immigrated, these problems can be almost insurmountable. **We try very hard to meet needs in a holistic way that will help the patient regain health.** This may include referral to a mental health provider, a support group, the Natural Helpers program, or a women's shelter. Learning about these deeply personal needs takes time and I appreciate that CHH leadership – Missy Schrock and Dr. Rose Gillin - recognizes this fact. **There is an amazing attitude in the clinic of the staff and volunteers working together to meet the needs of the patients.** This means clinic staff may stay late to call a patient or will very carefully explain instructions and tests. It means that I see the MA's, Diana, Areley and Gloria working as a team, helping each other out and communicating well about patient needs. It means that Sugey at the front desk is cheerful and welcoming and communicates necessary information to the clinical staff.



Diana reviews a patient case with Nancy.

Providing women's health care at CHH can be challenging but is always meaningful. I find the patients to be engaged and interested in their health. Every time I work at CHH, I'm reminded of the many in our community who have been through enormously hard experiences often due to circumstances beyond their control, **and yet they express gratitude and show amazing resourcefulness.** This is humbling and inspiring!

Tune in next month for another story!

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