

PATIENT STORY

## Relief and Autonomy Through Integrated Care

Moving from one town to the next is not always easy, and moving from state to state can become even more complicated. Troy understood this firsthand when she first moved from Illinois to the West Michigan area almost five years ago. As with any move, it requires reestablishing yourself in a brand-new location with brand-new healthcare providers. Before moving to Michigan, Troy saw a few different providers for her blood pressure, pain medication, and mental health. Upon arriving, she knew she needed to find new health providers in her community.

"It was very difficult finding care in Illinois. It was hard to get into places, and it was very clinical and very monetary-minded," Troy recalls, "For instance, my medical doctor would not refer me out to a mental health professional, it was my responsibility to find one myself." Troy suffers from medical anxiety, and this only made it more difficult for her to find care. She was not looking forward to reaching out to new clinics in the area.

Troy eventually found Mark Contreras when he was working with another health system. "I have such high praises for Mark," Troy says, "I would follow Mark to the moon and back!" And she did just that when Mark transferred to Catherine's Health Center a few years later, becoming a Catherine's patient herself.

This was not without its setbacks. Having to change clinics once again,

Troy remembers her medical anxiety flaring up at her first few appointments — particularly at her visit to Catherine's Dental. "I hadn't been to the dentist in years," Troy explains. When she arrived for her appointment, the staff gave space for her anxiety and made her feel as comfortable as possible. "Catherine's took away the mental obstacles I was dealing with like medical fear. I am very anxious in medical settings, but Catherine's was very understanding and really listened to me and my needs. They helped me overcome my fear."

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Citing Catherine's integrated clinics, Troy explains that her health is now better than ever. "Everything has been up and up since I came to Catherine's! I didn't even know that your dental health can affect your heart! Now, I am on no blood pressure medication, no pain meds, and only one pill for my mental health. When I first moved to Grand Rapids, I was on three blood pressure medications, and had a couple narcotics and opioid prescriptions. Catherine's helped me realize I was allergic to those opioids and narcotics, and they helped me feel better by taking me off them." The integrated



Troy, pictured above.

aspects of Catherine's allowed Troy to receive dental care, medical care, and behavioral health care all within the same organization — a drastic change to how her health was managed before.

"They see you as a three-dimensional person, no, a four-dimensional person! They listen beyond what I come in for, I'm really heard at Catherine's. To anyone looking to become a patient, and if you have medical anxiety like me, I would say [to] drop any preconceived notions and really talk to them. They are people, not staff. Be honest when you answer their questions; really put your heart out there. They are there to help you."

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

# Refugee Dental Day

At Catherine's, we know that the unique health needs of the communities we serve require intentional and innovative partnerships. We work with partners whose values align with our own and who share a vision of health equity to bring quality care to those who might not otherwise have access.

Refugees and newly arrived Americans are populations with often complex and distinct health care needs. In Grand Rapids, no one understands this more than our partners at Bethany Christian Services. When refugees arrive in the United States, they are required to undergo a series of health screenings in a short period of time. Culture and language add a level of stress that can be barriers to receiving care.

In 2022, Catherine's began hosting Refugee Dental Days with Bethany Christian Services. Once a quarter, we dedicate an entire day to providing

dental screenings to newly arrived Americans. Bethany coordinates the timing and transportation with each new patient, ensuring they have the information they need prior to their appointment. They also bring in live interpreters for the various languages needed that day, which greatly reduces any emotional distress.

*"A patient came in from Africa... [and] she was so grateful for the kindness our staff showed her during her visit that it brought her to tears."*

In 2022, we hosted four Refugee Dental Days, serving over 100 patients. If necessary, these patients also receive follow-up care at Catherine's. In 2023, we plan to host six days: four at our Dental clinic and two at our Streams clinic.



Pictured above, a mother and son who received care on Refugee Dental Day.

Refugee Dental Days wouldn't be possible without the support of another partner, the Delta Dental Foundation. The Delta Dental Foundation provides the funding that is needed for a full day of specialized care. With this support, we can focus on providing the high-quality and compassionate care these patients deserve.

## SITE UPDATES

# Changes at Catherine's

## Our New Mission, Vision, and Values, Full Lifespan Care, and Extended Hours

We at Catherine's are excited to showcase our newly amended mission, vision, and values. This next step in our growth represents a reflection of our commitment to our patients and our community. Our updated mission is to provide access to high-quality, affordable, and compassionate health care to **all**. This means that Catherine's is committed to our patient's care regardless of age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, housing status, disability, faith, education, or race.

Our new vision is to achieve a thriving community free of health inequities. Social justice, excellence, accountability,

community, inclusion, and compassion are our new values. Upholding these values will help us accomplish our vision as a reflection of our commitment to our patients.

### Full Lifespan Care and Extended Hours

Catherine's is excited to announce that full lifespan care and extended hours will be made available at all locations. With this change, we hope to provide more accessible and inclusive care for all. Full lifespan care allows the entire family to access high-quality health care, while extended hours provide more

opportunities for patients to attend their appointments. These adjustments bring Catherine's closer to achieving our new mission and vision and help uphold our values as an organization.

Full lifespan care is set to be available at all locations on May 15th, 2023, and business hours are set to be extended on June 5th, 2023. Business hours will be extended to 6:30pm one day per week for each location, with extended hours occurring on Tuesday at Creston, on Wednesday at Streams, and on Thursday at Wyoming. For more information on our business hours, or our updated mission, vision, and values, visit our website at [catherineshc.org](https://catherineshc.org).

## STAFF FEATURE

# SUD Treatment as Primary Care

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 20.4 million people in the United States were diagnosed with a substance use disorder (SUD) in 2022. Of those 20.4 million people, only 10.3% received treatment. At Catherine's, we are committed to dismantling health inequities in our community and now offer SUD treatment as a part of our primary care services. Our goal is to provide a holistic approach to health care so that all our patients receive the high-quality, affordable, and compassionate health care they deserve.

Dr. Heather Bunting leads SUD treatment at Catherine's Health Center and has been providing primary care for the underinsured and uninsured for the past 20 years. Before implementing SUD treatment, Catherine's supported the management of the co-morbidities that occur in patients with substance use disorders. "SUD is generally a diagnosis that does not occur in isolation — people with SUD many times also experience medical conditions such as chronic pain, mental health disease, and health complications related to substance use," Dr. Bunting explains. "I came to realize that for many people, appropriate SUD care was primary care and that in

order to treat other medical concerns such as hypertension, diabetes, and mental health, their SUD needed to be addressed and managed." Catherine's has now expanded our services to include SUD treatment within the primary care setting to better fulfill our mission to provide high-quality health care to our patients.

*"I came to realize that for many people, appropriate SUD care was primary care..."*

Today, Catherine's provides medication treatment for both opioid and alcohol use disorders through daily oral and monthly injectable options. Our behavioral health team also offers therapy for those with mental health disease concurrent with their SUD. By partnering with our local hospitals and recovery agencies, we can see patients in our office shortly after discharge as well as provide continued medical treatment for those in residential or outpatient treatment programs. As a community health center focused on serving those who experience barriers to care,



Dr. Heather Bunting, pictured above.

Catherine's believes that accessing SUD treatment should be as easy as accessing primary care.

"All the medical providers at Catherine's have completed additional training and are skilled in providing SUD care in the context of primary care," Dr. Bunting says, "Not only do we have the capacity to provide treatment to our community, but we are unique in that we offer [it] in a way that is respectful and trauma-informed so that our patients can receive the care that meets their emotional and personal needs."



## Healthy Tip!

### Did you know that May is National Mental Health Awareness Month?

Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in the United States during May since 1949. This month is meant to raise awareness and reduce stigma surrounding behavioral health and addiction, as well as to highlight the ways in which both can affect all of us. Here are some tips for managing your mental health\*:

- Get plenty of sleep
- Work some omega-3 fatty acid into your diet
- Spend time with a furry friend
- Exercise! It could be a 30-minute walk, or a full yoga routine!
- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Get creative! Write, paint, or try a craft project!

\*If you are in crisis or think you may have an emergency, call your health care provider or 911 immediately.



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## About Catherine's Health Center

Catherine's Health Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Federally Qualified Health Center. Catherine's has provided high quality, affordable and compassionate health care for over 27 years. Today, Catherine's provides comprehensive medical, behavioral health, and dental services at four locations throughout our community.

Thank you for your support! **If you have any questions or would like to make a donation, contact:**

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## Our Locations

### Catherine's Health Center Creston

1211 Lafayette Ave NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

### Catherine's Health Center Dental

781 36th St SE Suite B  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548

### Catherine's at Streams

280 60th St SE Suite #200  
Grand Rapids, MI 49548

### Catherine's Health Center Wyoming

950 36th St SW  
Wyoming, MI 49509