

PATIENT STORY

## Finding Dignified Care and a Love for Giving Back

**K**okob, a Catherine's patient and Board member, understands just how integral mental health is to overall well-being. She has known Catherine's for most of her life. When she was younger, she suddenly found herself having to find a new doctor after her parents' insurance status changed. Luckily, Kokob found Catherine's Health Center.

"I wasn't just a number. I felt like a person," she shares. As an adult, Kokob received support for her ADHD, anxiety, and depression at Catherine's. But switching jobs a couple years later forced her to seek care elsewhere.

"I had to go to a larger health system, with a different provider, and I missed filling my prescription because I couldn't afford it. A month later when I was able to afford it, my doctor refused to renew the prescription saying they wanted to test how I'd do without it. They took my choice away from me, and as a result, my health suffered."

*"Catherine's helped get me through some of my darkest days."*

Fortunately, Kokob was able to come back to Catherine's once we expanded our accepted insurances. Right away, she was treated with the dignity and care that she needed, and that everyone deserves. She was able to access her medications, find an amazing therapist,

and even got help from her provider to get a sweet Emotional Support Dog named Kylie. Now, five years later, she says that the anxiety and panic attacks have stopped and that she no longer needs anti-depressants. She also credits some of this to the life changing tools and skills she's learned in therapy.

"To a patient who is considering coming to Catherine's, I say, 'Definitely do it!' This is healthcare with dignity. They truly care, they know your name and your story, they follow up, and they don't turn you away."

Several years ago, Kokob decided she wanted to give back to Catherine's. She participated on a panel of African American patients and was soon asked if she would consider a Board position. As a nonprofit, Catherine's Health Center is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of community volunteers and at least 51% patients. Kokob was extremely eager to join the Board. "I could affect change in a real way! My voice is heard and the decisions I help make impact people of all different backgrounds. Especially those who are underinsured and others who just need a little help."

Kokob has helped secure funding for Catherine's and sits on the Board Recruitment Committee, helping ensure that the next generation of Board members is representative of patients and committed to the Catherine's vision of health equity.



Kokob and her Emotional Support Dog, Kylie.

"To anyone supporting Catherine's, thank you! You are helping with the most critical thing—health. Without you, people might slip through the cracks. You are improving the quality of life for folks in your community, and we are so grateful to have you on our team! Thank you for your support and for taking the time to read my story."

## STAFF FEATURE

## Get to Know our Community Health Workers

Many of our patients know that Catherine's is more than just a doctor's office. In addition to providing high quality medical, dental, and behavioral health care, Catherine's also offers a wide range of programs and services to help patients live their healthiest and fullest lives. We understand that health encompasses many facets that happen beyond the walls of an exam room. No one at Catherine's knows this better than our community health workers.

What is a community health worker (CHW)? CHWs are responsible for improving the health and wellbeing of the populations served by assisting individuals and families with access to available community resources and health programs. Catherine's has several CHWs, one at each of our sites to meet the unique needs of that specific community.

Emmerson, Lead CHW at Creston, shares, "Here at Catherine's, we assist patients with social determinants of health needs,

including transportation, food access, employment, healthcare access, and housing. Our team of CHWs are also certified navigators, meaning we can help patients and community members apply and access services through the state, like Medicaid, food stamps, State Emergency Relief, and WIC. Community health workers are passionate, equity-oriented individuals with a desire to provide access and resources to those in need."

CHWs connect patients and the larger community with various resources, health education, and care coordination. They may provide in-person appointments, triage phone calls, provide in-clinic programming or education, and you can often find them out in the community at events or working alongside partner organizations.

Isa, the CHW at our Wyoming clinic, shares a recent comment from a patient she helped get insurance: "They make signing up for insurance so hard to understand these days and without the



From left to right: Isa (Wyoming CHW), Emmerson (Lead CHW, Creston) Tyler (Mel Trotter CHW).

help from you and Catherine's Health Center I wouldn't have been able to get signed up."

Tyler, a CHW in partnership with Mel Trotter, sums up the importance of CHWs well, saying that their goal is to promote "widespread, equitable healthcare," which means addressing all aspects of a person's life in order to achieve optimal health.

## SITE UPDATES

## Expanding Behavioral Health Care in the Community

As the need for high quality, affordable, and compassionate mental health care grows throughout the community, Catherine's Health Center must creatively meet patients where they are. Two Catherine's "microsites" have been planned to connect behavioral health experts with patients who otherwise wouldn't have access to mental health services.

The first of these sites is already up and running at Townline Elementary in Kentwood. This exciting partnership between Townline Elementary and Catherine's Health Center is the first

school-based health care Catherine's has provided. As a part of this partnership, Catherine's provides an on-site behavioral health specialist to work with students one-on-one and in group therapy, setting students up to create healthy habits that will follow them through the rest of their lives.

The second microsite Catherine's plans to open soon is a behavioral health telehealth site at Mel Trotter. As a part of this partnership, Catherine's provides a community health worker specializing in unhoused populations to help connect individuals with behavioral health

providers virtually while they visit Mel Trotter. By partnering with Mel Trotter, Catherine's will be meeting potential patients in a space they already know and trust. This partnership is crucial in removing barriers to care to make sure that people experiencing homelessness in Grand Rapids receive the support, medication, and dignified care they deserve.

Catherine's hopes that these new microsites provide much-needed mental health support to these communities, connecting them to the care they need, when and where they need it most.

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

# Connecting the Community: Highlighting the Grand Rapids Public Library

Libraries are often the foundation for community growth, and the Grand Rapids Public Library is no different. For over 150 years, they have been a steady source of knowledge and security for the community, providing a safe space for patrons of all backgrounds to learn and grow. In addition to education and information, the GRPL provides community programming, an enormous selection of digital resources, language learning tools, business consulting, activity kits, and more, ensuring that the Grand Rapids community is always set up for life-long learning.

"Public libraries serve as a critical link to the rest of the community. They help patrons navigate social services and resources related to aging, mental health, public assistance, housing resources, health care, education and employment." John Bosma, Community Service Manager at the GRPL said. "For many

of our patrons, the public library is the safest physical space they have access to."

This year, Catherine's Health Center has had the honor of partnering with the Grand Rapids Public Library to table at their Main Library, connecting our community health workers directly with

*"Public libraries serve as a critical link to the rest of the community."*

patrons to provide health resources. Catherine's has also partnered with GRPL to host a monthly Healthy Habits Book Club, where Catherine's Health Coach, Katie, has guided discussions on nutrition, exercise, and habit forming. By meeting with library patrons directly, Catherine's hopes to remove barriers to

care and connect community members to the quality care they deserve.

"We see the need for effective and affordable health resources every day at the library," Bosma said on GRPL's partnership with Catherine's. "When someone is available to speak with a patron on-site, it helps build community trust and allows for an important exchange that offers patrons an opportunity they may not otherwise have access to."

Catherine's is grateful to work with the Grand Rapids Public Library to serve the community and ensure that everyone in Grand Rapids can stay healthy, happy, and connected. For more information about the GRPL and their many services and programs, visit [grpl.org](http://grpl.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS



## Tour Catherine's Health Center Wyoming

Our new health center in Wyoming is officially open! We are so excited to offer medical and behavioral health care at our newest location, for both children and adults.

Want to see the space? Contact Ally to schedule a tour at [ashook@catherineshc.org](mailto:ashook@catherineshc.org).

NOVEMBER 29TH IS  
**GOING  
TUESDAY**

## Giving Tuesday at Catherine's

Giving Tuesday is coming up on November 29th! How will you be giving back to your community? Consider supporting Catherine's behavioral health services this season!

## Healthy Tip!

Did you know that October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month?

Through routine screening and early detection, breast cancer is highly treatable with a 99% survival rate. Here are some tips for preventing breast cancer:

- Begin yearly mammograms at 40 years old
- Regular self breast exams
- Healthy diet & exercise
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Note any breast changes to your provider 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 26 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:

Ally Shook, Development Director  
(616) 336-8800 ext. 1206 | [ashook@catherineshc.org](mailto:ashook@catherineshc.org)

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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