



# Annual Report

October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020

# MOVING FORWARD... THROUGH STRENGTH AND STABILITY

Like every new year, we entered 2020 with all the hope a new year brings. No one could have predicted what was to come and the challenges we would face.

A few months in, a pandemic struck, causing shortages of personal protective equipment, shortages of hand sanitizer and disinfectants and the need to set up physical barriers for protection, which became our reality. We learned how to Zoom our meetings instead of meeting in person, we shared milestones with friends and families through computer screens, and we put many of our plans on hold. And yet, we found hope as we came together in our communities to care for one another and our patients.

Community Health & Wellness answered the call for help and partnered with the National Guard and the State of CT to set up systems for COVID-19 testing, performing over 5,000 tests, focusing on our most vulnerable populations. Our providers and patients stayed connected through a new way of performing office visits, telemedicine and telephone visits helped us continue to address their healthcare needs. We partnered with Helping Hands Food Bank and the Department of Agriculture to provide food for community residents suffering from food insecurity.

It is safe to say that 2020 has not been an easy year, yet if we find nothing of merit that came from it, then we lose. As we reflect on the activity of 2020, we could turn the page knowing that the pandemic taught us how to do things in a new way, perhaps what we once thought was not possible. We realized the importance of slowing down a bit and understanding the value of family and friends. We learned the true meaning of the old saying "life is short" as we suffered through loss. We paused to ask ourselves why in 2020 we are still facing issues of racial injustice and mourned the lives lost due to senseless acts. Today and always, we stand in support of our black communities and hope that in 2021 we see an end to the injustices. Most importantly, we saw how a community can come together and unite for a common goal. When we recognize and value these things, then we win.

Perhaps we feel there was not much to be grateful for in 2020, but if for nothing else, we can be grateful for having survived an unprecedented year, for having stood by each other in times like no other, for opening our hearts and giving when we thought we could give no more, for recognizing and defining the meaning of heroes and compassion among our front line workers. Together we cried, but we were there to hold one another up, we were there to hold the hands of those suffering alone and we protected and served and never questioned or wavered in our efforts.

To the amazing and dedicated staff of Community Health & Wellness, thank you for all you have done and continue to do for our patients, the communities we serve and for one another. With hope, we look forward to a better year. Thank You to the CHWC Board of Directors for your demonstrated support and thank you to our community partners for your collaborations to help us meet our patients' needs. With hope, we look forward to a new and better year.



**Joanne Borduas, MSN, MBA**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Community Health & Wellness





## MISSION & VISION

### **Mission**

*Community Health & Wellness (CHWC) is committed to keeping communities healthy. In a compassionate, high-quality and patient-centered environment, services are accessible and provided without discrimination, with cultural competence, and where all people matter regardless of ability to pay. Through coalitions, advocacy and sound fiscal management, these services will be sustained over time.*

### **Vision**

*CHWC will offer and continue to develop a range of healthcare services for the underserved throughout northwest Connecticut. It will achieve the reputation of provider of choice for affordable, high quality services that achieve positive patient outcomes. A welcoming and caring environment will be experienced by all patients and their families.*

*An organizational culture will exist that attracts and retains skilled, dedicated employees. Sound fiscal management practices will ensure long-term viability. CHWC will collaborate and advocate with other organizations to increase the region's capacity to meet health and wellness needs.*



# Clinical Programs & New Initiatives

## Behavioral Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the mental health of many people and created new barriers for those already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders (SUDs). The ability to monitor psychosocial needs and deliver support with face-to-face patient visits was greatly reduced during this crisis.

The Behavioral Health (BH) Team at Community Health & Wellness developed innovative programming to accommodate clients who were unable to be treated in person. Individual and group therapy sessions were offered via telemedicine.

As the pandemic continues, ongoing public health measures contribute to situations linked to poor mental health outcomes, such as isolation and job loss. Job loss is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. It may lead to higher rates of SUD and suicide. In response, the BH team developed and expanded the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program to treat clients with SUD.

Group therapy has also been a focus this past year, and several groups are being offered including Relapse Prevention, Trauma, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Insomnia Therapy and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT).

The Medical and BH clinical teams have been focusing on an Integrated Care model of service delivery in order to provide better care, while addressing the whole person. Both medical and behavioral health factors are crucial to a person's overall health and wellness.

Our patient-centered and holistic care is delivered by the integrated care team co-located in the Medical Department. This model provides better coordination and communication, while working toward improving overall health goals.

Recognizing that teachers' mental health has suffered during the pandemic, one of the BH clinicians presented Compassion Fatigue, a response to COVID through self-care, to faculty at the Torrington Schools. Three, one-hour long presentations were offered with positive feedback from the faculty. Our licensed mental health clinicians are also available to treat Middle School and High School children through our school-based health centers.

2020 was a year of substantial growth in BH, which included an expansion of services. Additional Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) and a Psychiatrist were onboarded to help us meet our goals of caring for our community and offering services to meet our patients' varied needs. At CHWC we also recognize that our community partners are an integral part of keeping our patients well and ensuring coordinated care that leads to quality outcomes.

## Medical

### Telemedicine

The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic was the defining global health crisis of our time and one of the greatest challenges we have faced. The pandemic resulted in many opportunities and changes to Health Center operations.

COVID-19 presented a challenge regarding how to continue to treat patients while decreasing exposure to a little-known virus. The team at CHWC worked quickly and diligently to implement Telemedicine. This was accomplished through the use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to provide care for patients remotely.

Benefits of virtual visits include:

- Limiting physical contact to reduce exposure to COVID-19
- Addressing health issues wherever patients are, even from the comfort of home
- Reducing commuting and traveling, time off from work, and the need for child care

Telemedicine remains part of our standard practice at CHWC as well as a fall back should a need arise to return to completely remote visits in the future.

## **COVID-19 Testing**

CHWC was one of the few Community COVID Testing Centers in the Northwest corner of Connecticut (CT) to perform COVID testing free of charge, through a contract with the CT Department of Public Health (DPH). Since March 2020, over 5,000 community members have been tested. Strong community partnerships were developed with municipal agencies, private companies, and community-based organizations through our outreach efforts.

Pop-up style community testing was hosted in surrounding towns including: Winsted, Harwinton, Plymouth, Salisbury, North Canaan, and Bethlehem, as well as other towns. These efforts will continue through the coming months. CHWC was one of the first healthcare organizations in the area to purchase a COVID testing booth to collect specimens from potentially infected individuals with little use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

## **Mobile Medical Unit (MMU)**

CHWC has recently purchased a mobile medical outreach vehicle. *BETTY*, as we have fondly named her, will soon *Bring Exceptional Treatment To You*. The aim of this innovative mobile health initiative is to increase access to healthcare services for the underserved populations in the rural communities that we serve. *BETTY* will be staffed with a multidisciplinary medical and outreach team.

## **Podiatry**

Podiatry services were added in the summer of 2020, as we continue our efforts to provide comprehensive healthcare services. Dr. Joan Tekula, DPM, has been caring for patients for over 32 years. Dr. Tekula considers it an honor to take care of the human foot and provides expert care, especially for patients with diabetes.

## **Diabetes Program**

CHWC is developing a Diabetes Program to provide our patients and community with a valuable resource in the prevention and management of diabetes through individualized, patient-centered services that build self-management skills. This program includes both a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) based Diabetes Prevention Lifestyle Change Program and a Diabetes Self-Management Education Program. Our interdisciplinary team includes a Registered Dietitian/Board Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist, Registered Nurses, LCSWs and Community Health Workers (CHWs), all of whom are engaged in specialty training in diabetes care and education.

# Clinical Programs & New Initiatives (con't)

The diabetes program is integrated with our team of expert behavioral health psychiatrists and LCSWs in a patient-centric and holistic approach to diabetes care. In 2021, we expect to achieve program recognition and accreditation through the CDC and the Association of Diabetes Care and Education Specialists, as well as become a Medicare Recognized Diabetes Education Program.

## Dental

2020 has been a year of change and growth for the dental team. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, changes were made in the Dental Department to adhere to the recommendations made by the CDC and American Dental Association (ADA) in regards to patient care. Medical grade air purifiers and barriers were placed in the dental treatment rooms and new protocols were adopted regarding personal protective equipment. New work flows were developed in order to ensure that staff could provide services to patients in a safe manner.

Furthermore, we continued to grow the dental team with new staff members. We added a new dentist, hygienist, lead dental assistant, dental assistant, and dental patient access representative and will continue to expand our dental team in order to provide services which include fillings, cleanings, dentures, partials, and root canals. We hope to expand the dental team in Winsted this coming year.

## Operations

### Unite Us

CHWC has signed-on to Unite Connecticut, a statewide initiative of the Connecticut Hospital Association, that connects health and social services providers through a shared technology platform.

Called Unite Us, the platform is designed to identify and address the social needs of patients through a closed loop referral process. CHWC is integrating social determinants of health into healthcare practice to provide whole person care by addressing patients' social needs through partnering with community-based organizations across service types including food assistance, housing, transportation, and more.

Community Health Workers screen patients with a five-question screening tool. If needs are identified, the patient signs a consent, and a referral is made electronically via Unite Us. One of our network partners receives the case and follows it until resolution. Updates and outcomes are documented and the CHWC interdisciplinary team gains access to the updates via Unite Us. This social infrastructure will give us the ability to track health outcomes, improve health, and measure impact.

### Patient Wayfinding

Through a multidisciplinary team approach, CHWC embarked upon creating a healthcare environment that is both situationally and patient-centric. By incorporating key wayfinding design principles, the goal was to create a better patient experience during a stressful time.

The team leveraged the opportunity to visually communicate our organization's mission and vision to connect with patients and incorporated our new branding so that patients could associate CHWC with the new logo. New signage was created on the exterior building, near the street, as well as the interior. To be culturally sensitive, multilingual signage in Spanish was also incorporated for our diverse patient population.

## **Risk Management**

### **Summary of Activities**

January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

The Risk Management Committee identified six goals for the 2020 calendar year. These goals are in alignment with the Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals and address opportunities for improvement identified through a review of the 2019 data trends. The dedicated team greatly impacted patient and employee safety over the past year.

The six goals were:

- 1) Foster a Culture of Safety throughout the organization.
- 2) Through proactive risk assessment and analysis, improve processes around the reporting of lab results and diagnostic imaging to prevent the occurrence of adverse events.
- 3) Conduct a debriefing following occurrences to improve safety practices.
- 4) Use medications safely. Consistently document five rights of medication administration and reduce likelihood of harm associated with use of anticoagulant therapy (Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals 2020).
- 5) Use hand hygiene guidelines from the CDC and/or the World Health Organization (WHO) (Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals 2020).
- 6) Communication and documentation
  - Improve real-time effective communication among all disciplines
  - Standardize provider documentation through the use of templates

In 2020, the Risk Management committee re-trained all staff to increase use of the incident reporting system. The Safety Officer conducted monthly rounds and provided real-time training on safety protocols. Process mapping was performed on the reporting of lab and diagnostic imaging results to ensure that patients receive results in a timely manner.

The Quality Department implemented a process for performing debriefings that allows the team to learn what opportunities we have for improvement as well as reinforce those things that we are already doing well.

To ensure the safe use of high-risk medications, care coordination was provided for patients on anticoagulation therapy. The time out procedure and the informed consent were revised to improve patient safety. The Medical Department conducted monthly hand hygiene audits and maintained 100% compliance.

In order to improve communication, Microsoft Teams was utilized to communicate with the multidisciplinary team in real-time. Templates were developed in the electronic health record (EHR) that allow for more standardized documentation.

All of these tactics have allowed our dedicated team to successfully mitigate risk and improve patient safety.

# Continuous Quality Improvement Committee

## Summary of Activities

January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

The Continuous Quality Improvement Committee (CQI) identified goals for the 2020 calendar year. The dedicated team worked to provide our patients with high-quality safe care.

The goals were:

### 1) Access to care

To improve access to care, a new phone system was installed that has decreased wait times significantly. The implementation of the phone system has improved patient communication with the care team and has resulted in improved patient satisfaction.

### 2) Clinical quality and safety

The focus for clinical quality included two high risk chronic conditions, diabetes and hypertension. The Registered Dietician, a social worker and two charge nurses received education and obtained their certification to enhance care for the diabetic patient population. Hypertension and diabetes will continue to be a focus in 2021.

### 3) Health information technology

The Patient Access staff utilized the EHR to enroll patients in the patient portal, allowing them to receive their care via telemedicine. This provides our patients with the ability to continue to receive medical and behavioral health care in a remote setting.

### 4) Patient satisfaction and loyalty

Patient satisfaction surveys are conducted for patients to provide feedback regarding the care that they are receiving. New questions were added to the patient survey to obtain feedback regarding telemedicine services. In the last quarter of 2020 all of our departments, Medical, Dental and Behavioral Health, received high scores indicating that our patients are very satisfied with the overall care that they receive.



Four members of the CHWC COVID-19 testing team

# Human Resources and Compliance

## Human Resources

With the onset of the pandemic, and a reduced workweek schedule as a result, the majority of our staff were enrolled in a special Department of Labor program called Shared Work. This program allowed staff to earn a more generous unemployment benefit while working reduced hours. Staff were enrolled in this program from March until August of 2020.

From the beginning of the pandemic, CHWC received many donations from members of our community.

Local businesses, local residents and business partners generously donated PPE as well as masks.

Human Resources application and hiring process transitioned from paper to electronic (January 2020).

Positions added to staff due to growth in 2020: We added a third Psychiatrist to our Behavioral Health department, Chief Operating Officer, Director of Quality and Safety, Clinical Informatics Specialist, two Insurance Verification Specialists, a Podiatrist and an Associate Medical Director.



*Director of Nursing Michelle Brady with Cristin Davis, RN*

We welcome the new staff to our CHWC family and look forward to a great year ahead.

## Fundraising Committee

### May 2020

CHWC hosted a drive-in food giveaway event to assist with food insecurity in our local community. 100 bags of food were given away.

### October 2020

Our annual fundraising event "Community, Cocktails & Comedy" raised \$6,950. Our event was held virtually due to the pandemic.

### November 2020

In lieu of our in-person annual Thanksgiving breakfast CHWC gave out 100 complete turkey dinners.



# Human Resources and Compliance (con't)

## Compliance

### January 2020

- All Staff Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

### February 2020

- All Staff Incident Reporting Training

### May 2020

- State of Connecticut "Re-open Connecticut Training" for All Staff and Contractors
- Mandatory Reporting Training for All Staff

### June 2020

- Human Resources and Credentialing File Audit (for HRSA visit)

### October 2020

- All Staff Intimate Partner Violence Training

### November 2020

- Risk Assessments Bi-annual Review for All CHWC Positions

### December 2020

- Audit of Behavioral Health Email and Protected Health Information Security Processes
- Weekly Health & Safety Reminders sent to all staff regarding COVID safety (Beginning May 2020). (Topics have included: Social Distancing, How COVID spreads, The Importance of Wearing a Mask, How to Clean Your Mask, Don't Dismiss Your Symptoms)
- Signage updated in all CHWC lobbies encouraging social distancing, safe practices during the pandemic and how to wear a mask properly

## Financial Report

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, through the hard work of our providers and their teams, CHWC was able to meet the COVID-19 challenges that interrupted the second half of the year. FY 2020 visits totaled 25,208, which was a reduction of 15% from the prior FY.

One of the highlights of FY 2020 was the growth of the Behavioral Health Department. Through increased patient access, Behavioral Health visits increased 84% from the prior FY.

Additional funding provided by Federal Grants and Small Business Administration Payroll Protection Program (SBA PPP) loans allowed our team to purchase supplies that enabled CHWC to continue to provide medical access to the community and increase our ability to stay connected to our patients through a telehealth platform.

All of these efforts resulted in a year-end positive net cash flow as a result of these operating activities.



Our COVID testing team hard at work



Joanne with nonperishables for our "Drive Away Hunger" Food Giveaway



We filled knit caps with essentials for "Hats on to Winsted"



BH created a new group therapy room



BH curated exhibits of patients' artwork in the lobby



Painting by Natalia Crespo (Instagram "n.c.artsy")



Our intrepid healthcare heroes



We partnered with Helping Hands Food Bank to distribute fresh produce



We volunteered for "Read Aloud" day at Forbes School



Pre-COVID, we hosted Thanksgiving breakfast at Torrington and Winsted



CT State Representatives visited us during our "National Health Center Week" celebration



Our team has tested thousands of individuals at our outdoor testing locations



## Board of Directors

Joanne Borduas

*Ex-Officio*

President/CEO

Community Health & Wellness

Lesa Vanotti

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Director of Community Services, N.O.W.

Jennifer Kelley

Executive Director, Winsted Senior Center

Nicole Pelchat

Consumer

Joel Sekorski

Executive Director, Sullivan Senior Center

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## Community Health & Wellness Center

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