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San José Clinic:
Forever Healing

UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON
CENTER for PUBLIC HISTORY

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR – Faith, Dignity, and Love



Debbie Z. Harwell, editor.

Seeing a magazine come together is always an exciting process. This one was particularly rewarding because the San José Clinic's story captivated the students from the moment they learned about it. Some were moved by the emotion and compassion that came across in the interviews they conducted. For others, the stories reminded them of their family members who were

immigrants and non-English speakers in need of care at some point, whose worries would have been eased had they known about the clinic.

In the fall of 2020, our students at the University of Houston began collecting oral histories with thirty people associated with the clinic at every level, from former patients to volunteers and CEOs. At least four of our interviewees had ties going back to the 1960s and 1970s, half the

clinic's 100-year history. Another group of students then conducted research and wrote the articles.

While many themes emerged from the interviews, the ones that stood out to all of us were faith, dignity, and love. Faith in the clinic's spiritual roots, such as "praying payroll in," showed their belief that what was needed would be provided. Dignity was affirmed as each person crossed the clinic's threshold and received the best possible care with the utmost respect. And the love that "held the bricks together" created a reciprocal feeling of family between providers and patients that seemed to last a lifetime.

We are grateful to Maureen Sanders for this amazing opportunity to collaborate with the clinic. Thank you also to the interviewees who entrusted us with your stories; it was our privilege. To my students, I appreciate you giving this everything you had to do these stories justice. Special thanks goes to Grace Conroy who volunteered all summer and into the fall to complete the final edits.

Some of our readers may have heard of the Mexican Clinic from the 1930s, but very few records connect it to the San José Clinic we know today that is part of the Texas Medical Center family. It is our honor to bring this little-known piece of Houston history to light. ○

From Zero to 62 and Cruising to 100!



Maureen Sanders, San José Clinic President and CEO.

Surely, you have had times in your life when you reflected on the road you travelled to get you to where you are today.

For the past two years, San José Clinic has been preparing for 2022 and the big 100th anniversary celebration. Many staff, volunteers, donors, religious orders and clergy have played a significant role in helping the clinic achieve this milestone.

And, upon reflection, the Holy Spirit has been guiding

the way to 2022, in particular, through yours truly, since I assumed the leadership role of the clinic in mid-2018.

You see, I was born in a Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word hospital, St. Mary's, in Port Arthur, Texas. As the story goes, my mother did not want to give me an Italian first name (although I am Italian), so she let the Irish nuns name me Maureen. This name was an advantage as I attended Catholic school and was taught by Dominicans and Sisters of Charity from grades 1-12. I attended Bishop Byrne High School, named

after the fourth bishop of the Galveston-Houston Diocese, serving from 1918-1950. Christopher E. Byrne was the Bishop when the clinic started in 1922, but he passed away in 1950, so I never met him. Nevertheless, the school laid a stable foundation for me and my philosophy for caring for those less fortunate.

During a lengthy career in commercial banking, the Charity Guild of Catholic Women were my longstanding client. I only came to understand their history in 2013 when I became a member. They were "the group of women" who gave the first \$59 to start San José Clinic! And as I transitioned into the non-profit sector, that same year, I joined the clinic staff as the Chief Development Officer. I quickly learned that the clinic's "landlord" was none other than the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word!

I thought to myself, "Good grief, I can't get away from these women!"

Recently, one of the Sisters who was my high school principal called me at the clinic just to say hello. In her very Irish brogue, she said that she always knew I would do good things in my life and how appropriate it was that I was giving back to the community in such a significant way by leading San José Clinic.

As we lean forward into our next century, our vision remains clear – providing access to a healthier future for all, inspired by faith, driven by innovation, and powered by the human spirit.

Zero to 62 has been very good to me and with San José Clinic at my back, cruising to 100 and beyond should be a piece of cake! ○

San José Clinic: Forever Healing

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Cover Photo: *Sister Clara Deegan enjoys time with a tiny patient and his mother at the San José Clinic. Sr. Clara joined the staff in 1967 as a supervisor and served the clinic for eighteen years.*
 Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

The San José Clinic thanks the Summerlee Foundation for its generous grant support to provide the clinic with copies of this special edition magazine in celebration of the clinic's centennial.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 | From Fear to Faith: The Founding of the San José Clinic
 By *Karla Rodriguez*
- 6 | The Catholic Church and the San José Clinic: One Hundred Years of History
 By *Miles Bednorz*
- 11 | San José Clinic Establishes its Place in Houston's Medical Mecca
 By *Grace Conroy*
- 17 | "San José Saints": Treating Patients from Head to Toe
 By *Grace Conroy, Caitlyn Jones, and Debbie Z. Harwell*
- 23 | Respect, Dignity, and Making a Home
 By *Joseph Castillo*
- 26 | Pillar of Refuge, Honoring Maria Ramirez
 By *Joseph Castillo*
- 28 | Hometown Heroes – The Women Behind the San José Clinic
 By *Sarah Chikhani*
- 32 | "A Magical Time": Christmas at San José Clinic
 By *Celine Pineda*
- 34 | On a Wing and a Prayer: Houston Nonprofits Support San José Clinic's Mission
 By *Grace Conroy*
- 37 | Fundraising with Heart: The Inspiration Behind San José Clinic's Annual Fundraisers
 By *Grace Conroy*
- 39 | Celebrating the San José Clinic Centennial and Looking Forward to the Next 100 Years
 By *Alondra Torres*
- 43 | Houston Happenings
- 44 | Endnotes

From Fear to Faith: The Founding of San José Clinic

By Karla Rodriguez



Established in 1922 to address the high mortality rates in the Mexican and Mexican American community, the Mexican Clinic, shown here in 1930 at 1909 Canal Street, boosted the overall health of the community within two years of opening.

Houston Post-Dispatch ©Houston Chronicle. Used with permission.

Guadalupe was expecting her fourth child in five months' time in October 1938. Her eyes once sparkled with joy over her children, but now they were filled with fear and grief for her beloved husband John, who had died. She worried about how she would take care of their three young children let alone a fourth. Guadalupe fell ill, perhaps from heartache, or maybe something else was wrong. But how could she afford to go to the doctor when she lacked money for food and rent? Frightened with nowhere else to turn, she arrived at the Mexican Clinic to ask for aid. Her three children trailed behind her, afraid and clinging to her skirt.

A caring doctor and attentive nurse examined Guadalupe and her children, while the women volunteers gave her hope and encouragement. She learned a great deal during her clinic visit, which eased some of her fears. Soon her health improved, and her children were more fit than they had ever been because the clinic offered her guidance on how to care for them. In an article featuring Guadalupe's journey, the *Houston Chronicle* reported, "She will have a fine baby that will grow into a healthy child because the clinic will take care of the baby too."¹

Before the Clinic

In the early twentieth century, Mexican immigrants, many fleeing a revolution in their homeland, came to Houston seeking better opportunities. After World War I, however, it became more challenging for Mexicans to find employment as returning Anglo veterans displaced them, and labor unions accused the Mexicans of taking jobs from Americans. Falling into poverty, many Mexican American residents barely earned enough to survive. They represented one of the city's most impoverished ethnic groups, living in substandard housing that lacked basics like running water, which led to rapidly deteriorating health. Most notably, pneumonia and tuberculosis brought the Mexican community's life expectancy down lower than that of the general public.²

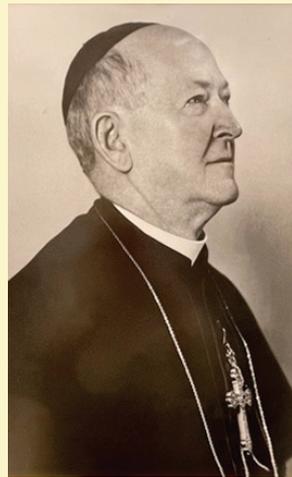
Malnourishment and disease from their impoverished conditions led to high infant mortality, as did mothers' lack of knowledge about childcare. According to a 1922 health report published in the *Houston Chronicle*, 658 children in Texas died in June alone. Of those, 58 were Mexican children under one month of age and 195 were Mexicans

between one and twelve months old. Even though Mexican parents compared favorably to other ethnic groups in their care prior to a child's birth, the report

Known for his generosity and dedication to the community he served, Msgr. George Walsh of Annunciation Catholic Church helped establish a free clinic, la Clínica Gratuita, later renamed the Mexican Clinic and now San José Clinic.



Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



Bishop Christopher E. Byrne supported the clinic's founding and placed it under the protection of Saint Joseph in 1946.

Photo courtesy of Maureen Sanders.

indicated a "lack of proper hygiene result[ed] in intestinal derangement, malnutrition and enteritis [as] the principal causes of death."³

In 1922, Monsignor George T. Walsh, who headed Houston's Annunciation Catholic Church, noted the high infant mortality rate among the Mexican American community, including those in his own parish. It was a time when "the parish priests had to have their finger into many things to try to help the people that they were trying to serve," Sister Pauline Troncale, director of the clinic in the early 1990s, explained. With support from Bishop Christopher Byrne, Msgr. Walsh appealed to the local National Council of Catholic Women chapter, which later became the Charity Guild of Catholic Women, to assist in creating a clinic for the disadvantaged children.

Under the leadership of Katherine (Mrs. Lucian B.) Carroll and Theodora (Mrs. W. E.) Kendall, fifty-nine members of the Charity Guild pitched in a dollar each, raising enough to procure the clinic's original location. From the beginning, the clinic was open to all without regard to their race, creed, national origin, or sex. Today, the clinic's mission remains as it was at its founding: "To provide healing through quality healthcare and education with respect and compassion for those with limited access to care."⁴



Katherine Carroll was a cofounder of the San José Clinic and Charity Guild of Catholic Women. Her leadership along with that of Theodora Kendall placed the clinic on the path to success.

Photo courtesy of the Charity Guild of Catholic Women.

Launching the Clinic

The Clínica Gratuita initially opened in 1922 at 1900 Franklin Street in Second Ward, or Segundo Barrio. The Charity Guild and Msgr. Walsh appealed to doctors, friends, and strangers who donated "hat racks, chairs, sideboards, rugs, and medicine" to get started. Drug companies and hospitals also donated supplies. Dr. Peter Scandino was the first to offer his services to patients and he invited others who followed, including a dentist, eye doctor, and dermatologist. Josephine Pratt, a social worker, recalled the day the clinic opened, "We didn't have anything in the building at all – no furniture, no patients. So I walked out in the street and looked around until I found an old Mexican



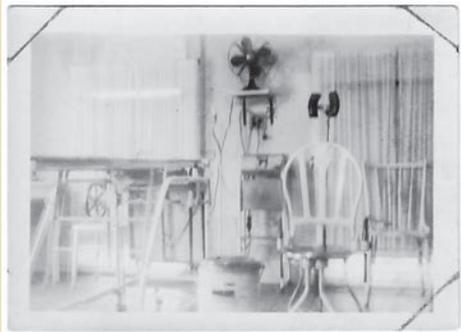
The growing number of patients seeking care forced the clinic to relocate. Three years after opening, la Clínica Gratuita moved to Canal Street and changed its name to the Mexican Clinic, although it treated low-income individuals of many ethnic groups.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

woman who looked sick, and I brought her in.” Fourteen years later, the woman was still a regular at the clinic. In its first two years, the clinic saw a decline in infant mortality in the Mexican community due to the attentive medical and overall healthcare it provided.⁵

In 1925, the clinic changed its name to the Mexican Clinic and moved to 1909 Canal Street, which stood in a poor area then called Five Points, in the heart of Second Ward. The average number of patients seen weekly reached 100, including as many as forty babies examined and treated in one day. Rent, electricity, gas, telephone, drugs, and incidentals to operate the clinic ran about \$350 per month.⁶

The high number of children’s visits reflected the need for natal care in the Mexican community. The *Houston Chronicle*



When opening the Canal location, the clinic wanted facilities that matched the quality of the healthcare it provided. Although the facilities, circa 1930, look comparatively sparse today, the clinic provided efficient and comfortable service to patients with help from grants and donations.

Photos courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

described the scene in the clinic in 1926, “With little hands and noses shining, children come to the clinic dressed in mother’s cut down dresses or papa’s pants made over to more or less the right size. They answered to Juanita, Maria, Sara, Carmen, Vira, Angel, Felix, José, Manuel, Ramon, and Emelio, and one young mother answered to ‘Weelie’ for her son ... Always quiet and demure, these Mexicans who need aid and encouragement, are models of patience and innate gentility. Old and young, they love little children.”⁷ For many of the families, this was the first healthcare facility that humanized children.

By 1927, the Mexican Clinic was receiving a high volume of patients thus needing more funding and support from the community. In 1928, Houston’s Community Chest (later United Way of Greater Houston) added the Mexican Clinic to its funding list, allowing the clinic to expand its resources and services, which were offered to babies and children on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings and adults in the afternoons. Hospital treatment was performed at either St. Joseph’s Infirmary or Jefferson Davis Hospital. At first the clinic struggled to convince its patients that getting treatment would not result in death. Pratt described the challenge, saying, “The people were superstitious about coming to a hospital, but we gradually overcame their objections.”⁸

The Great Depression

The Mexican community, which had reached 12,000 people by 1930, suffered at the start of the Great Depression when poverty levels increased due to the plummeting economy and loss of jobs. Discrimination was at a peak with Americans accusing Mexicans and Mexican Americans of “stealing jobs.” The situation led to forced deportations, and the government failed to offer aid. Disease and hunger were rampant in the community. Tuberculosis reached epidemic proportions, a statistic made worse by overcrowding in homes and poor nutrition. Even though the clinic lost revenue from donations during the downturn, it worked to aid the underprivileged with the limited resources it had. The clinic distributed cans of milk every week to boost community health and prevent children from getting sick. Mrs. Arthur Clark, a graduate of St. Mary’s Nursing School in Galveston who ran the clinic, was reportedly “untiring in her efforts to get milk from the various milk companies, Borden’s, Carnation, and Pet.”⁹

By November of 1937, Pratt reported a noticeable decline in infant mortality, indicating, “The city can see some tangible results of the clinic’s work over the last 14 years in the fact that the death rate of the Mexican population here has dropped 40 percent since 1923.” That same year, the Community Chest allotted \$4,249.92 to the Mexican Clinic.¹⁰

Although the clinic needed an additional nurse to cover the caseload in 1938, the clinic increased the visits to 1,200 a month, according to cofounder Theodora Kendall who served as the clinic’s president. By 1942, the Mexican Clinic had an operating budget of \$7,232 and offered medical, dental, optical, surgical, obstetrical, and well-baby care. The clinic distributed



The San José Clinic's initial success in reducing the mortality rate among the Mexican community attracted many new visitors. By 1938, the clinic reached 1,200 visits each month and was capable of offering a variety of medical services.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

milk and commodities, as well as immunizations for typhoid, smallpox, and diphtheria to students who attended De Zavala, Jones, and Rusk Elementary Schools.¹¹ Thus, the Mexican Clinic played a crucial role in aiding poor families during the Depression and into the 1940s.

Mexican Clinic to San José Clinic

In 1946, Bishop Byrne requested the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, which ran St. Elizabeth Hospital in Houston's Fifth Ward, take over supervision of the Mexican Clinic. Sister Leonardine and Sister Manuela ushered in a new era for the clinic. By 1946, proposed renovations included expanding the examination rooms, adding two waiting rooms, and painting the building. During the renovations, the clinic only operated the baby and prenatal clinics, but a year later, it reopened with space to accommodate the growing number of patients seeking care. On March 19, 1947, St. Joseph's Day, Bishop Byrne blessed and renamed the facility San José Clinic, a place under the protection of St. Joseph, who looks after the needs of many people, including the sick.



Sister Leonardine's interest in the wellbeing of the Mexican American community influenced her decision to accept Bishop Byrne's request for her congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, to run the San José Clinic.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

In 1954, the San José Clinic stood in the path of a new highway system and moved to temporary quarters in the nearby Clayton Homes housing project at 1919 Runnels Street. Two connecting apartments were converted for use by the clinic for fifteen months while a new building was constructed. That same year, the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception resigned from administration of the clinic to fulfill the needs at St. Elizabeth Hospital. At the request of Bishop Wendelin Nold, the Houston-based Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word took over the clinic's management.¹²

In 1956, the new San José Clinic opened at 301 Hamilton Street. The Scanlan Foundation donated land and money to build the new clinic, costing \$160,000. The air conditioned, fireproof building had 4,600 square feet of space with twenty-four rooms, including a spacious reception room and modern facilities for both medical and dental out-patient care. It was the perfect setting for the new era of modern medicine in the twentieth century.¹³

Legacy

Founded to serve Houston's Mexican American community, the San José Clinic has continued to care for Houston's underserved when it comes to allocating resources and providing healthcare. Moreover, the clinic's mission extends beyond providing medical care and enabling impoverished families to live a fulfilling life. Guadalupe's story is but one example of how a mother's life and the lives of her children improved after visiting the clinic, where the whole family received care and the medical providers gave Guadalupe hope for the future despite the loss of her husband. The San José Clinic has always gone above and beyond to not only save lives but also change lives, remaining true to its mission for the past one hundred years. ○

Karla Rodriguez is a senior at the University of Houston majoring in political science and history with a minor in Spanish. After graduation, she plans to attend the UH Hobby School of Public Affairs to continue her passion for public service.



When the clinic was forced out of the Canal location by freeway construction in 1954, it temporarily relocated to Clayton Homes, a few blocks away.

Photo courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006-1198r.

The Catholic Church and the San José Clinic: One Hundred Years of History

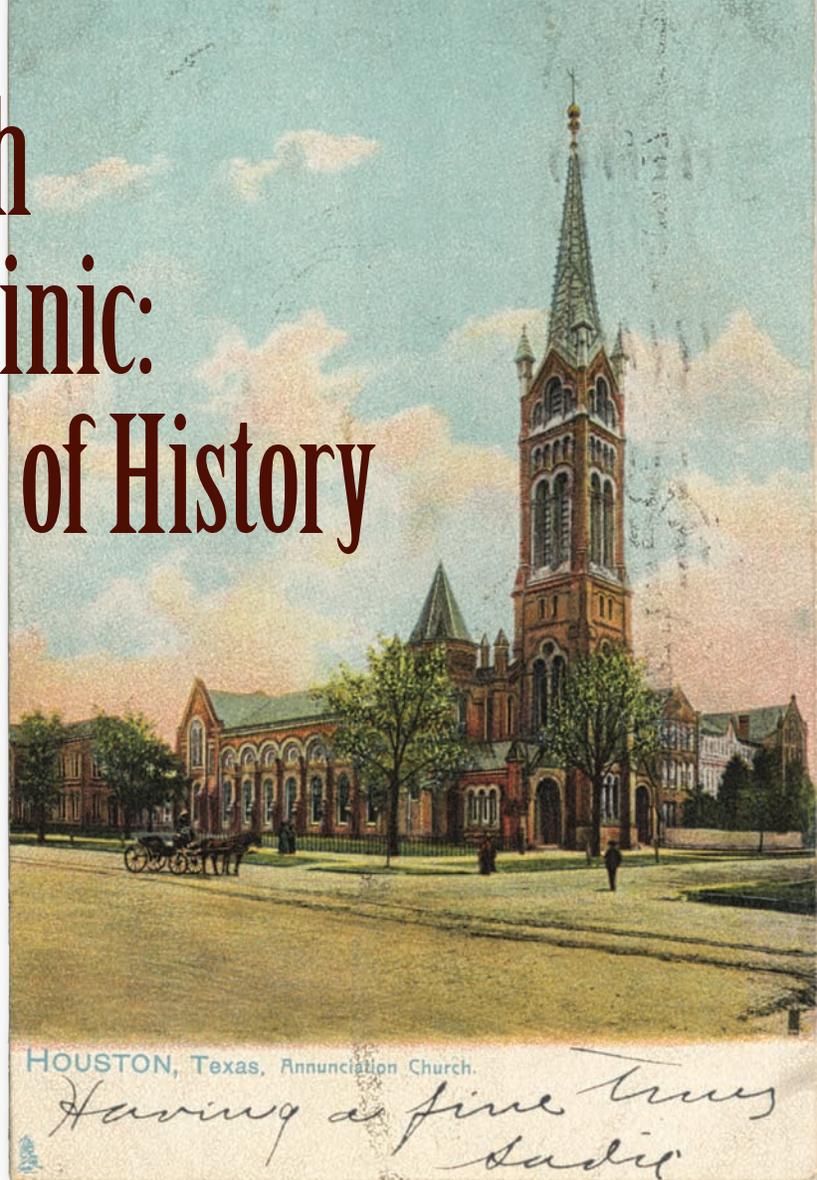
By Miles Bednorz

“Among our tasks as witnesses to the love of Christ is that of giving a voice to the cry of the poor.”¹

— Holy Father Pope Francis

Emerging from the rapidly growing congregation of St. Vincent's Catholic Church, Annunciation Church became Houston's second Catholic Church when it was dedicated in 1871 and is the oldest existing church building in Houston. Postcard date, 1907.

Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.



The Catholic Church has always been the foundation of the San José Clinic. Catholic groups and institutions like the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, and the Charity Guild of Catholic Women have provided financial support and leadership throughout the clinic's history. Many Catholics, including Maureen Sanders, the president and CEO of the clinic and a self-described “cradle Catholic” who has been raised in the church since birth, have felt drawn to the clinic as an opportunity to “live their faith in their work.” His Eminence

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, sits on the clinic's board of directors, highlighting a commitment by the Catholic Church to the San José Clinic's mission, and from 1954 to 2010, the clinic stood on land owned by the Archdiocese.² For a century, Catholics who have devoted their lives to serving the sick and needy have cared for the San José Clinic and its patients.

Meeting the Needs

After becoming the fourth bishop of Galveston in 1918, Bishop Christopher Byrne expanded the church ministry among African Americans and Mexican Americans in Houston and made local clergy a priority, ordaining about seventy priests who were Texans. In the early 1920s, he worked with Monsignor George Walsh, pastor at the Annunciation Church, to address the high infant mortality rates among Mexican children. Characterized as a man who loved the poor, Walsh was distressed that so many infants and children of Mexican families were dying young and asked the local chapter of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW), now the Charity Guild of Catholic Women, to help establish a free clinic in his parish to help



Appointed Archbishop of Galveston-Houston in 2006, His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo guides 1.7 million Catholics in their faith, while continuing to support the San José Clinic as a member of the board of directors.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

In response to rising mortality rates among Houston's Mexican community, Msgr. Walsh recruited Catholic women to assist in founding and running la Clínica Gratuita.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



the struggling Mexican community.³ Clínica Gratuita, later renamed the Mexican Clinic and then San José Clinic, was founded in a collaboration between Walsh, the church, and the NCCW.

Walsh was born in Washington, D.C. in 1874, and came to Texas sometime after the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, when the Catholic Church sent him to St. Patrick's parish in Galveston as pastor. He took charge of Annunciation Church in Houston on January 1, 1914. Nine years later, he was granted the ecclesiastical title of "monsignor" for his accomplishments serving the church. His involvement in the establishment of the San José Clinic was not a surprise, as he often gave generously to charity. Parishioner W. E. Kendall, whose wife, Theodora, was a founding member of the Charity Guild, called Walsh one of the kindest and most generous men he knew. Before the Community Chest, a predecessor of United Way, became involved with the clinic, the *Houston Chronicle* reported that "[the clinic] often had hard sledding getting together enough money to take care of the

needs of the sick and afflicted. Monsignor Walsh, in those days, was the chief support of the institution. When the money would run low, he would ask those in charge, 'Well, don't you need a little money today?' And he would make a substantial donation out of his own pocket."⁴

Walsh later established several other institutions to help his parish, including the Catholic Women's Club to support rural women seeking jobs in Houston and the Convent of the Good Shepard for "young female victims of divorced households." While the clinic is Walsh's only lasting creation, he lived a life in service to his community. At the time of his death in 1933, the clinic was regarded as one of the largest charity operations in Houston, serving 1,000 patients a month.⁵

More than a decade later, Bishop Byrne searched for someone to manage the clinic, which had lost volunteer workers during World War II. In 1946, he invited the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to head up the operation. This congregation was founded in Brazil by German missionaries in 1910, and many settled in Patterson, New Jersey, in the 1920s. Sister Leonardine and Sister Manuela, who both had an interest in the welfare of Mexican Americans, came to Houston to honor Byrne's request for help. They took over management of the clinic on October 1, 1946, and held their first board meeting one month later.⁶ At the time, the congregation also operated St. Elizabeth Hospital in Houston's Fifth Ward, which served the African American and Mexican American communities.

On March 19, 1947, Bishop Byrne placed the clinic under the protection of St. Joseph on his feast day and renamed it San José Clinic. Sr. Leonardine and Sr. Manuela ran the San José Clinic until 1954 when they withdrew from management due to a shortage of nurses at St. Elizabeth Hospital. Bishop Wendelin Nold, who succeeded Bishop Byrne in 1950, then asked the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word to step in and manage the clinic.⁷

Charitable Sisters

Based in Houston, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word is a congregation dedicated to serving the sick. In 1866, Bishop Claude Marie Dubuis noticed sickness and poverty in the Diocese of Galveston and, after many unsuccessful attempts to bring nursing and hospital sisters to the region, founded a new congregation to establish the hospitals his diocese so badly needed. Three nursing sisters from Dubuis's native France – Sisters Mary Blandine Mathelin, Mary Joseph Roussin, and Mary Ange Escudé – volunteered for the mission, and these founding members of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word arrived in Galveston on October 25, 1866. The sisters began working at St. Mary's Infirmary, the first Catholic hospital in Texas, in April 1867.⁸

The Sisters of Charity have been working in Houston since at least 1887, when they established their first permanent institution outside of Galveston, St. Joseph's Infirmary, in downtown Houston, created at the invitation



Run by the Missionary Sisters of Immaculate Conception in its early years, St. Elizabeth Hospital in Houston's Fifth Ward served San José patients who needed more specialized care. The Sisters of Charity later ran the hospital in the 1980s.

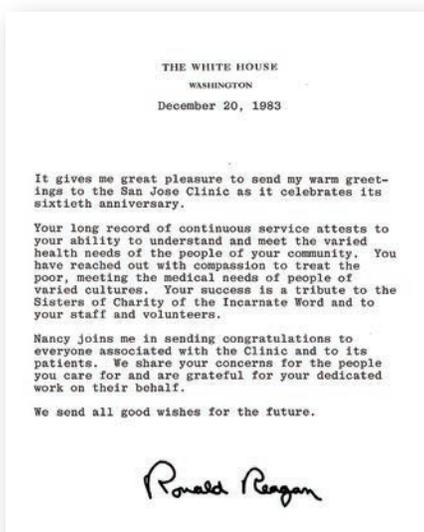
Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.



Founded in Galveston in 1867, St. Mary's Infirmary was the state's first Catholic hospital. Photo courtesy of Sisters of Charity of the Incarnated Word.

of Father Thomas Hennessy of Annunciation Church. In 1886, the Sisters of Charity entered into an agreement with Harris County to care for patients at the request of the Commissioners Court. They tended the sick in Houston and Galveston during a smallpox epidemic in 1890 and during yellow fever outbreaks in the late 1800s. As a gesture of appreciation from the city of Houston, the sisters, easily noticeable in their black and white habits, received free trolley rides around the city.⁹

In 1900, Galveston was devastated by a hurricane that killed over 8,000 people. It washed away St. Mary's Orphan Asylum, killing ten sisters and ninety children. After the storm, the sisters rebuilt their orphanage, repaired damage to St. Mary's Infirmary, and continued their work in Galveston. In the 1920s, however, the congregation decided that Houston would be a more suitable location for its headquarters. A new convent, located just east of what is now Interstate 45 at the corner of Lawndale Street and Wayside Drive, was built on seventy-two acres of wooded land and named Villa de Matel to honor Mother Jeanne Chezard de Matel, who founded the Order of the Incarnate Word in seventeenth-century France from which the local congregation is derived. The convent officially opened as a novitiate for young nuns in 1926 and began training women who wished to join the congregation.



Sister Teresa of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word was devoted to caring for the poor. Her success in leading the San José Clinic earned her recognition from President Ronald Reagan in 1983.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Villa de Matel became the official motherhouse of the congregation in 1928 when Mother M. Placidus began directing the sisters' apostolic work from the convent.¹⁰

In 1954, after the resignation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception from the San José Clinic's management, Bishop Nold appealed to Mother Elizabeth, the superior general of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, for help. With her approval, on June 4, 1954, the Sisters of Charity took over management of the San José Clinic. Sister Mary Angela became the new administrator and Sister Dominica served as the new supervisor. The Sisters of Charity helped the clinic relocate to its new building at 301 Hamilton Street just two years into their



The San José Clinic has been managed by Catholic women since its inception and was placed under the care of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word in 1954. Sister Teresa, center, arrived in 1966 and was the longest-serving administrator, pictured here with clinic staff.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic

tenure. The new space had twenty-four rooms, and "the most modern type of medical and dental outpatient care ... provided by doctors and dentists ... on a volunteer basis." Most importantly, it allowed the sisters to continue carrying out their mission to help the sick and the suffering.¹¹

"Live My Faith"

Over the past sixty-seven years, members of the Sisters of Charity have made notable contributions to the San José Clinic. The longest-serving administrator was Sister Teresa Quinn, who led the clinic from 1966 to 1985, seeing it through multiple expansions and nurturing partnerships with providers and funders to offer the best possible care. Accolades for Sr. Teresa came from near and far, including President Ronald Reagan who wrote to her at the clinic's sixtieth anniversary: "Your long record of continuous service attests to your ability to meet and understand the varied health needs of the people of your community. You have reached out with compassion to treat the poor, meeting the



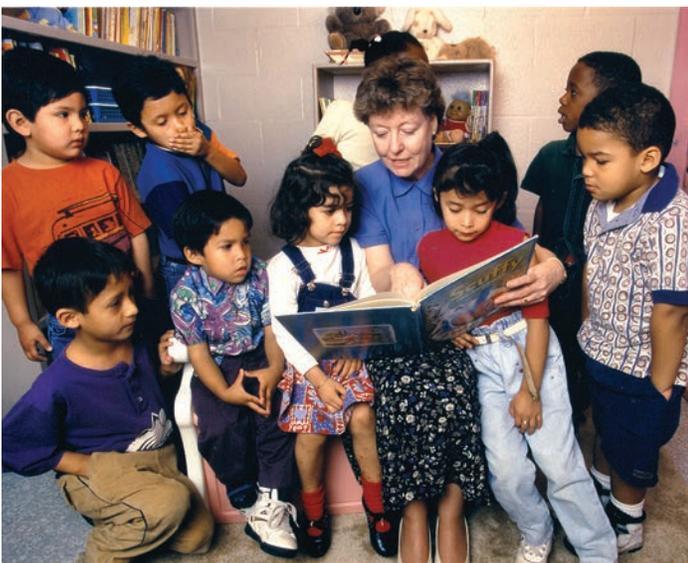
Sister Kathleen Howard introduced computing technology to the clinic as computers began to be widely available, enabling the clinic to keep up with the times and continue providing reliable services to its patients.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

medical needs of people of varied cultures. Your success is a tribute to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and to your staff and volunteers.”¹²

Sister Kathleen Howard joined the clinic on May 6, 1984, in the newly created position of director of social service, established to connect patients with non-medical resources. In addition to the social services area, she reorganized the medical records and registration departments and worked with the Sisters of Charity Healthcare System in 1987 to install the first computer system at the clinic for patient registration. This was a major advancement and helped the clinic keep pace in a rapidly changing world of technology. Soon after the installation of the computer system, Sr. Kathleen was reassigned to a new position at Villa de Matel. The 1987 Annals notes that Sr. Kathleen “will be greatly missed” after her short time with the clinic.¹³

Sister Margaret Bulmer also made notable contributions to the clinic during her time as executive director, from 1985 to 1990 and from 1992 to 1999. Sr. Margaret was kind and caring, according to Dr. Lloyd Pate. He remembered that



Serving as director of the San José Clinic for a total of twelve years, Sister Margaret Bulmer focused on ensuring that the clinic’s services were widely accessible to those in need.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.



Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza, blessing an addition to the clinic in 1987, became the first Archbishop of Galveston-Houston in 1985 and served until 2006. Stan Marek, a long-time clinic supporter (not shown), called Archbishop Fiorenza a visionary when it came to the clinic and its mission because he understood people and poverty.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

she once asked him to treat a homeless person with a red eye whom she had brought to the clinic, despite the fact that this person was not a registered patient. She looked for ways to make care more accessible and help those in need. In 1986, Bulmer arranged for the price of dental care at the clinic to be lowered, as she felt that many families did not have the extra money to pay for dental services. The next year, Sr. Margaret led an effort to help candidates seeking amnesty under a new immigration law receive their required health examinations by organizing monthly events to provide free exams at the clinic.¹⁴

After taking a sabbatical to return to nursing, Sr. Margaret resumed her duties as executive director at the San José Clinic in 1992 and picked up right where she had left off. She said in 1993 that the clinic is “the place where I can live my faith” and that she kept a copy of the Beatitudes, or Catholic blessings, on the wall in her office to remind her of her mission to help the poor and the needy. In 1996, under her leadership, the clinic opened a learning center that offered GED classes as well as classes in English, reading, and writing. After her departure from the clinic in 1999, Sr. Margaret left a powerful legacy. Stacie Cokinos, who became the clinic’s executive director in 2001 and served for ten years, said that Sr. Margaret was “always referred to with such affection” and “never left the minds of the clinic or the patients.” On May 27, 2017, Sr. Margaret celebrated her Diamond Jubilee with the congregation, when she renewed her religious vows and commitment to the mission of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.¹⁵

Caring for All

The work of the Sisters of Charity did not stop with the San José Clinic or St. Joseph Hospital. In 1999, the sisters combined their healthcare systems in Houston and San Antonio to form CHRISTUS Health. Six years later, however, the



The Sisters of Charity established St. Joseph Hospital in 1887. The maternity wing added in 1937 welcomed so many new Houstonians it became known as “Houston’s birthplace.” The hospital and San José Clinic maintained a long relationship to provide patients with needed care.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

Sisters of Charity and CHRISTUS decided to sell Houston’s St. Joseph Hospital after it became clear that “a general hospital dedicated to serving the underserved cannot endure” on its limited income due to decreasing Medicare payments and the number of uninsured patients. While the Sisters of Charity and the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston supported the sale, they affirmed that this would not be the end of their work to provide accessible and affordable healthcare in Houston. Sister Olive Boredelon and Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza announced that the proceeds from the sale would go to the San José Clinic and that “the mission of St. Joseph Hospital would continue.”¹⁶

After the hospital’s sale, the CHRISTUS Foundation began looking for a new home and initiated talks with the clinic about constructing a new building to house both the foundation and the clinic. After more than fifty years at the 301 Hamilton location, the clinic was in bad shape. Les Cave, former president of the CHRISTUS Foundation, said that the building “was beyond its suitability for them to run a clinic out of there.” The roof leaked, and, Cave added, “it wasn’t set up for people with wheelchairs and disabilities” because it had no elevator. A new building would give the clinic’s volunteers more space to better treat their patients. In 2008, the San José Clinic and the CHRISTUS Foundation agreed that the foundation would construct a new building to house them both, and the clinic would rent its space from CHRISTUS for one dollar a year. Two years later, the San José Clinic moved to the new, 55,000-square-foot, three-story building located at 2615 Fannin Street.¹⁷

While the San José Clinic is a Catholic institution staffed and managed largely by Catholics, those who receive care are not required to be Catholic and a large portion of the clinic’s patients do not identify as such. Stan Marek, Houston businessman and longtime supporter of the clinic, insisted that patients are “[people] of God [and they] will be

taken care of” regardless of their religion or any other factor. Dr. Michelle Herrera, current chairman of the San José Clinic board of directors, pointed out that the clinic leadership “just happens to be a group of Catholics who decided to address some of the social issues in [Houston].”¹⁸

Since its founding, the San José Clinic has always received the full support of the Catholic Church. Bishops have recruited sisters to manage the clinic. Clergy have attended openings where they have blessed the clinic. The Charity Guild of Catholic Women, who provided the initial funds to start the clinic one hundred years ago, operate a consignment shop with a part of the proceeds going to the clinic. Even those who are not part of the church leadership, like CEO Maureen Sanders, are closely tied to the organizations that operate and support the clinic. Sanders has been around the Sisters of Charity her entire life. She explained, “[N]ot only was I born in one of their hospitals, their nuns gave me my Irish name. I was educated by them for twelve years.” Now, she concludes, being chosen to head the San José Clinic in a building that is owned by the Sisters of Charity and CHRISTUS Foundation “was definitely a sign that this is where I needed to be.”¹⁹

Msgr. Walsh saw the deprivation in the Mexican community in the 1920s, and today that extends to immigrants who have come to Houston from Central and South America, Africa, and Asia, as well as people born in this country who are in need. Cardinal DiNardo reflected on Houston’s diversity, saying, for the clinic to “care for – every day – medical [and] practical care for people is part of ... our mission as a church. To reach people where they are day by day,” he said, “and to help people get through the day is spectacular.”²⁰ ○

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The Charity Guild of Catholic Women will celebrate its centennial at the same time as the San José Clinic, as they both formed in response to Msgr. Walsh’s request in 1922. The Charity’ Guild’s Centennial Committee is coordinating a year-long commemoration.

Photo courtesy of Kathleen Falcona and the Charity Guild of Catholic Women.

San José Clinic Establishes its Place in Houston's Medical Mecca

By Grace Conroy



Registered nurse Carol Wolkk and Sister Margaret Bulmer take care of a young patient at the San José Clinic in 1986. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Children are frequently seen chasing one another and laughing loudly, without a care in the world, but some children cannot partake in such simple pleasures. This was the case for one little boy in Houston's Mexican community who had a club foot, destined only to watch his friends cherish their playtime, until something short of a miracle occurred. When visiting Houston's Mexican Clinic, now the San José Clinic, a surgeon's kind offer to operate on the boy's foot changed the trajectory of the child's life. When the little boy later attended the clinic's Christmas party, he was seen romping around with the other children, gleefully enjoying the holiday, no longer held back by the club foot.¹ The boy's surgery in 1927 foreshadowed future successes for the clinic, changing tens of thousands of lives, as it took advantage of advancing medical technology, expanding community partnerships, and twice moving to new and larger facilities in the decades to come.

Finding a New Home

Along with adapting to advancing technologies in the post-World War II era, other changes occurred at the San José Clinic in the early 1950s. The Missionary Sisters of Immaculate Conception had managed the clinic since 1946 but now felt the need to turn their full attention to St. Elizabeth Hospital in Houston's Fifth Ward, which they also managed. Bishop Wendelin Nold appealed to the Sisters of Charity of

the Incarnate Word to run the clinic, and they took over June 1, 1954.²

At the same time, an increase in patients and the status of disrepair at the clinic's 1909 Canal Street location made it difficult to keep up with demand. So when the highway department planned to take the land for the Eastex Freeway, the clinic arranged to move. From 1954 to 1956, it relocated temporarily to two apartments in the nearby Clayton Homes housing project at 1919 Runnels. During this time, thanks to a generous \$160,000 donation from the Scanlan Foundation, a new clinic was built at 301 Hamilton Street, providing more space for patients and new equipment as well as facilitating better service. The new clinic occupied 4,600 square feet comprised of twenty-four rooms in a fire-proof, air-conditioned building – a “magnificent” building compared to the prior “shabby” model, the *Houston Chronicle* reported.³



The San José Clinic location at 301 Hamilton Street opened to patients in 1956, providing a larger state-of-the-art space for its patients and volunteers. Interview participants for this project who remembered the facility described it with affection. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

The years 1969, 1975, and 1986 saw space added onto the clinic with help from the Scanlan Foundation. But most importantly, patients and staff alike looked at it with the utmost affection. Decades later, Michael Sullivan, a clinic board member involved with San José Clinic since the 1970s, fondly remembered the Hamilton location as an eclectic, unique building with “so many additions ... Some things worked, some things didn't, some things looked like they had received



Former San José Clinic president and CEO Stacie Cokinos and Dr. Benjamin Lichtiger review a model of the clinic's current building.
Photo courtesy of Stacie Cokinos.

Stacie Cokinos reminisced upon the genuine care and excitement volunteer doctors felt toward the San José Clinic. On his initial visit to the Hamilton location, Dr. Benjamin Lichtiger, head of pathology at MD Anderson Cancer Center, asked excitedly, "Wow, wow, what can I do to help? I can come and help you clean the facility. I'll clean the restrooms. What can I do to help?" His response was "so sincere and humble," Cokinos and board member Didi Garza laughed and said, "No, Dr. Lichtiger! We want medical – medical!" Dr. Lichtiger eventually became a board member and was board chair when the clinic broke ground on the current building.

them from the Smithsonian ... It was a wonderful setting." Maria Ramirez, who worked in that building for thirty years, reminisced, "It was beautiful; it was old, but to me it was nice. Because of course it's not where you work, it's who you work with and all your surroundings."

Growing parallel to the space were the number of volunteer doctors and medical services. To fulfill its patients' needs, the clinic offered specialized care in optometry, dentistry, pediatrics, maternity care, dermatology, gynecology, surgery, podiatry, and otolaryngology (ENT). Even amid the transition between clinic locations, in 1956, the San José Clinic received 16,289 visits and had a budget of \$34,502. The clinic focused primarily on preventative care and made sure its patients could afford to receive it by keeping prices low, with fees for a check-up ranging from \$0.50 to free of charge.⁴

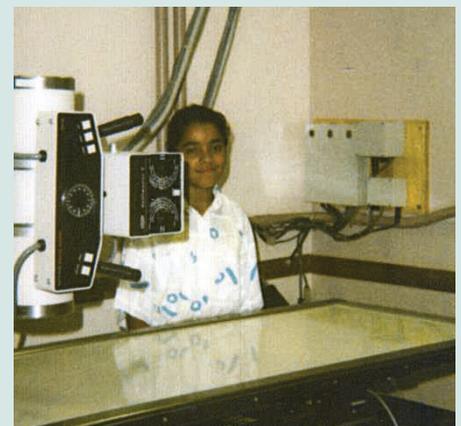
Building a Medical Community

Throughout its history, the San José Clinic has entered into partnerships that have enabled it to expand its offerings to patients and maintain its standards of excellence. For example, in 1970, the clinic entered into a partnership with the Dominican School of Nursing through which senior nursing students conducted their clinical rotations at the clinic, visited patients at their homes, and cared for any health needs. Once the Dominican School closed, other nursing programs have taken on those responsibilities at various times, including the University of St. Thomas and the University of Texas Nursing School.⁵

In 1972, the clinic partnered with the University of Texas Medical School at Houston (now McGovern Medical School) pediatric department and faculty member Dr. Susan Skrovan. The medical students and residents performed their rotations in the clinic's pediatric department under faculty supervision, treating approximately sixty-five patients a day, four days a week. Dr. Margaret Carter McNeese noted that the experience was "a huge

On May 24, 1988, this young patient became the first to use the clinic's new X-ray machine. St. Joseph and Hermann Hospitals volunteered to read the clinic's films for free.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



boon for our students and residents because ... [they saw] a canopy of medical conditions that our residents wouldn't have [seen] without these individuals that came, many from Mexico and South America, with illnesses and diseases you really didn't see [here] at that time."⁶

Drs. McNeese and Findley carried on the pediatric program, and McNeese instituted the Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, which provided vouchers and food education to serve young mothers and future generations. Dr. McNeese stated that many expectant mothers were diagnosed with anemia because they lacked access to a proper diet. WIC offered the natural solution by providing food vouchers to ensure the mothers ate well and could provide for other children in the family.

San José Clinic's original goal of caring for infants and mothers to reduce mortality rates among the indigent has carried forward throughout its history in cooperation with local hospitals. By 1979, increasing numbers of births made it clear that an additional obstetrics clinic was needed. Dr. Stone took on the role of the attending obstetrician providing prenatal care at the clinic, and St. Elizabeth Hospital agreed to receive low-income mothers for their

deliveries. In 1984, when fees increased at St. Elizabeth, the obstetrics program shifted to St. Joseph Hospital, placing Dr. J. Lucci and her OB/GYN residents in command. San José Clinic's patients continued visiting 301 Hamilton for prenatal care but now traveled to St. Joseph to deliver their newborns. The clinic saw obstetrics patients every Tuesday, averaging seven new expectant mothers each month. To maintain these growing partnerships, construction began in 1986 on an addition with five social services offices, three WIC offices, a new clothing store, and an administrative office that Bishop Joseph Fiorenza blessed for St. Joseph's Day following the opening.⁷

The clinic's leadership stayed on top of developing trends in medicine and opted to serve the community in time of crisis. In the 1980s when AIDS emerged, many people refused to be in the same room with an infected person, let alone care for them. By contrast, Sister Margaret Bulmer, who headed the clinic, attended meetings to learn about HIV/AIDS and how to care for patients. The clinic became an official HIV testing site with Carol Wolkk, R.N., state certified to do testing and counseling. The clinic also coordinated with other groups that provided services it did not have.

Likewise, when Houston experienced a tuberculosis (TB) crisis in 1994, the UT Medical School and City of Houston proposed San José operate as a follow-up clinic for those who contracted the disease or had been in contact with someone who was infected. A pulmonologist from Baylor College of Medicine led the TB clinic with a nurse and x-ray technician. The pop-up clinic provided an invaluable service for patients in low-income areas and helped stop the spread of TB across the city. As the twentieth century was nearing an end, the clinic that started with \$59 and 300 patients in 1922, had an annual budget over \$2.5 million with 23,030 patient visits.⁸



San José Clinic's waiting room at 301 Hamilton was typically full of patients, often overflowing outside. This led to opening a pediatric satellite location in Spring Branch in 2002 to help families outside the inner city.
Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Branching Out

With the success of the San José Clinic's pediatric clinics, the leadership believed a satellite location would help provide care for those outside Houston's urban center. The specific Spring Branch neighborhood that was chosen for a pediatric clinic lacked sufficient healthcare facilities to serve its growing population. To solve this issue, San José rented a space at 8575 Pitner Street near Hempstead Highway and Bingle Road. The 6,000-square-foot satellite opened in December of 2001 and was blessed by Bishop Fiorenza on April 4, 2002. Unfortunately, the rent became more than the clinic could afford for the services provided, and ultimately the branch, which saw about 1,000 patients in 2004, had to close. Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., believes that the location also struggled because most people did not know it was there.⁹

After half a century of serving patients at 301 Hamilton, the clinic building was showing its age. At the same time, in 2006, the CHRISTUS Foundation for Healthcare made the decision to sell St. Joseph Hospital, leaving the foundation in need of a new headquarters. As the non-profit works alongside the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, the leadership was already familiar with the San José Clinic and aware it also needed a new home. Les Cave, then president of the CHRISTUS Foundation, recognized the decreasing sustainability, high operating expenses, and escalating maintenance that had come to define the Hamilton location. Cave recalled, "When we saw a chance to build a new building, it was the idea of the foundation and the Sisters of Charity and CHRISTUS to go ahead and build a new home for San José at the same time, and then [rent] it to them for a dollar a year. So, we worked together then to build that new clinic." This arrangement enabled the clinic to improve its services and direct more funds to patients and equipment.¹⁰

Former president and CEO Stacie Cokinos, who served from 2001 to 2011, recalled the board's regular strategic



A volunteer at the San José Clinic teaches a class about childhood dermatological fungal infections. Patient and family education remains an integral part of the care provided to patients.

Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006N-1970-2957-25.

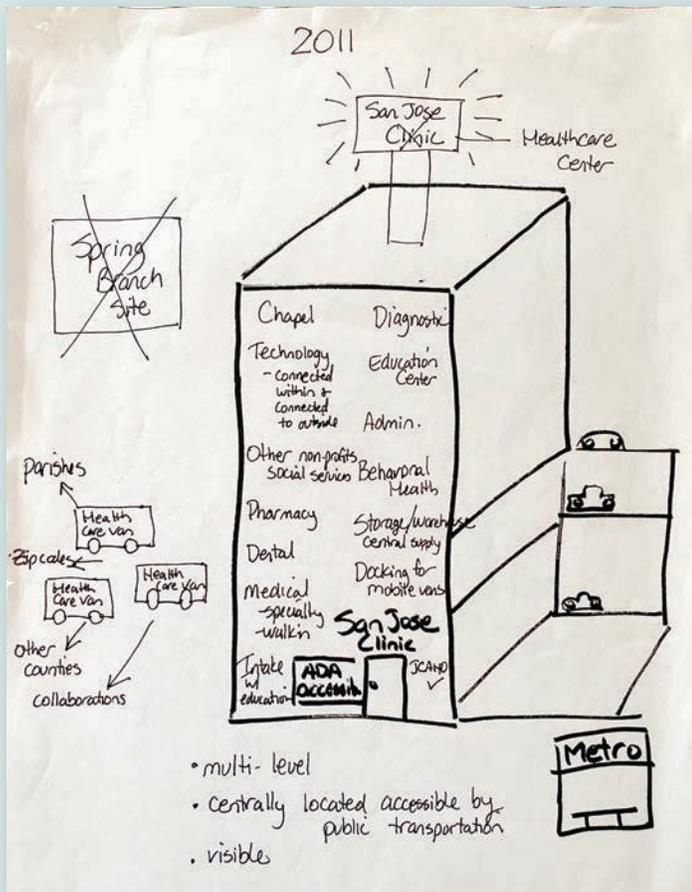
planning meetings early in her tenure: “The outcome of that was a little cartoon drawing that sort of summarized the work of the board retreat, and we set a vision statement: ‘by the year 2010, San José Clinic will be in a new facility with multiple partners under one roof to make it easy for patients. ... We will close the satellite, and we will be in an accessible location by public transportation.’” She reminisced that the simple little cartoon represented their collective vision, and that is exactly what became a reality through the CHRISTUS Foundation’s support.¹¹

Construction on the new 55,000-square-foot building at the corner of Fannin and McGowan began in 2008 and was completed in 2010, with the San José Clinic occupying 33,000 square feet of space. While the clinic experienced many wonderful years at 301 Hamilton, its worn appearance suggested – incorrectly – that inadequate services were performed inside. The new clinic’s exterior, however, matched the superior services offered there. Cave acknowledged that some people believe it is acceptable to provide poor people care in an inferior facility. The new building affirmed every patient’s worth and dignity and also allowed the clinic to expand its services, including nutrition counseling, psychological counseling, chronic disease support, and education.¹²

The new facility opened on February 6, 2010, and one



The San José Clinic’s first medical director, Sherri Onyiego, recognized army veteran and physician’s assistant volunteer, Louis Wu (1949–2020) as volunteer of the year in 2018. He served the clinic more than ten years. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



This simple drawing made at a strategic planning meeting gave birth to the idea for San José Clinic’s current location, which was built by the CHRISTUS Foundation and opened in 2010 at Fannin and McGowan.

Photo courtesy of Stacie Cokinos.

month later Congress passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). It was intended to provide more affordable healthcare premiums and expand options to improve access to medical care, but the way some states implemented the program created confusion. The ACA prohibited those who qualified for Medicaid from applying, but states like Texas chose not to expand Medicaid eligibility, which meant some people who qualified for Medicaid by federal standards had no access to it through the state, leaving them without coverage in either system. Thus, places like San José Clinic found themselves in higher demand because some people were left without any coverage and because the working poor still could not afford premiums through the ACA. Paule Anne Lewis, president and CEO from 2011 to 2018, noted this created challenges. Clinic leaders had to explain to funders and people who were not “healthcare savvy” that the ACA “was great in so many aspects, but because the way Texas had chosen to implement it, or not implement it, the impact was so much greater.”¹³

The increasing patient load and a tripling of the clinic’s physical footprint with the new building made it clear that a medical doctor needed to be onsite at all times. Maureen Sanders, current president and CEO of the San José Clinic calls hiring a full-time medical director “by far the most significant change” the clinic experienced. For over ninety years, volunteers provided all the clinic’s patient care, but when they could not come in, patients had no one to see them. Through a partnership with St. Joseph Hospital, the clinic received a grant from the Harris County Healthcare Alliance to hire a medical director in 2013 for a three-year term, allowing an



Dr. Warren Bellows, a volunteer, examines one of the clinic's many patients. In 2020, 81 percent of the clinic's patients were Hispanic/Latino and 34 percent were men. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

individual to “expertly implement a quality improvement program, quality measurements of patient outcomes ... and [be] a leader from the clinical side that understood the scope of patient care.” The San José Clinic hired Dr. Sherri Onyiego who saw patients and provided a consistent clinically trained eye to observe patient proceedings into 2017. Dr. Diana Grair followed and, as the current medical director, finds her role rewarding as she is “more active in the healthcare of these patients, with more autonomy in practice and the ability to initiate new programs and seek out opportunities and grants so that [the clinic] can expand the amount of patients it serves and the type of services it offers.”¹⁴

Nevertheless, the volunteer model is still at the heart of how the clinic operates to make care affordable. And the volunteers are completely invested in the clinic, including former medical students who return years later. Maureen Sanders recalled one advisory board member who is about twenty years into her career reacting emotionally at her first board meeting, “She just sat there crying. She [said], ‘I did my student rotation here, and to now be on the other side of the table as an advisory board member just means a lot.’” It is part of the “culture of giving” handed down over the years, explained Sanders, who sees keeping that going as her biggest challenge.¹⁵

The modern facility and addition of a medical director elevated the San José Clinic’s status in Houston’s medical community. Lewis had extensive experience working with various medical center institutions, enabling her to form relationships to benefit the clinic, its patients, and the entire healthcare community. In meeting potential partners, she demonstrated how “San José Clinic took the burden off of the county healthcare system, and other health systems, by keeping people out of the emergency rooms.” Dr. Grair points out that the clinic’s preventive care keeps people from

getting extremely sick, which helps keep costs low, and that prevention along with “managing chronic medical issues without interruption helps prevent comorbidity [additional diseases emerging] and extended hospitalization.”¹⁶

In 2016, the San José Clinic recognized an increasing need to add mental health services to provide integrated health-care to its patients. The clinic partnered with El Centro de Corazón, a clinic that was also serving the uninsured in the East End and had a strong social and behavioral health program. They received a grant from Houston Methodist Community Benefits program to bring in a licensed professional counselor (LPC) intern through the completion of her degree program. Lewis noted that the clinic saw many patients who needed more than medical care alone. The issues included depression, domestic abuse, eating disorders, and substance abuse while some also struggled with the fear of deportation. She added, “If you think about all these things and the general stress – can you imagine? You have to really think about the lives that our patients are living on a day-to-day basis.” Today, the clinic has a bilingual LPC who has experience working with the Latino community, which comprises the majority of the clinic’s patients.

With a new facility and Lewis’s expertise and connections, the clinic added services, increased revenues, and built awareness. All of this led to San José Clinic being admitted into the internationally renowned Texas Medical Center (TMC) in 2017. Although the clinic predates the medical center, chartered in 1945, and several campus hospitals – including Hermann Hospital (1925), M.D. Anderson (founded in 1942, moved to TMC in 1954), Methodist (founded in 1919, moved to TMC in 1951), St. Luke’s (1954), and Texas Children’s Hospital (1954) – TMC membership means greater access to lab equipment and medicinal technology and raises the value of the clinic from a local organization to a member of a worldwide medical center, according to Michael Sullivan.¹⁷ Several



Pictured from left to right, Texas Medical Center president and CEO, William F. McKeon; Houston Business Journal president, Bob Charlet; then San José Clinic president and CEO, Paule Anne Lewis; and San José Clinic advisory board chair, Philip Morabito attend the San José Clinic’s 7th Annual Fall Speaker Series in 2017.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

volunteers called San José Clinic “Houston’s best-kept secret,” but hopefully the TMC partnership will bring further awareness to this hidden gem.

Responding in Times of Crisis

On August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey struck the southern Texas coast as a Category 4 hurricane. While Houston escaped the worst of the winds, tornadoes and approximately forty-five inches of rain battered the city, leaving over 154,000 homes flooded in Harris County.¹⁸ Volunteer medical professionals and others who came to help in time of need gathered in shelters. The San José Clinic utilized its newfound recognition to support the effort, continuing its legacy of aiding the Houston community.

The crisis challenged the clinic to adapt its patient policies. Gone were requirements for identification or proof of eligibility; if an individual needed care, they received it. Eager to support others, the clinic opened its doors on August 31, only six days after the storm made landfall. Lewis claimed it was “second nature for us to open our doors even wider and wave patient fees as we came together to pull through this trying time.” Beyond medical care, the clinic provided insulin or prescription refills, including for evacuees housed in the city’s shelter at the George R. Brown Convention Center. San José established pop-up clinics for those who could not reach its main location, providing care to those outside of Houston’s central hub. One pop-up located in Rosenberg at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church inspired San José to open a satellite location in Fort Bend County in 2020. A sign of their dedication, all this Harvey relief was done even as the clinic’s staff dealt with their own flooded homes.¹⁹

Through these types of experiences, the San José Clinic has learned how to adapt in emergencies. Thus, in a time of confusion and fear of the unknown, as we saw during the COVID-19 pandemic, the San José Clinic knew how to react. With the city and county under a stay home-work safe order, the clinic met with patients virtually through a telemedicine platform known as Luma. This allowed patients to receive healthcare while still following Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID. In addition, patients who required medical prescriptions remained socially distanced thanks to the clinic’s drive-through pharmacy that dispensed 10,426 prescriptions between March and December of 2020. These procedural adaptations enabled the clinic to care for approximately 3,000 patients during 18,662 visits at the Houston clinic.²⁰ Similar to its adaptations with Harvey, San José Clinic offered cost reductions and a satellite location to better serve the low-income population. Although the opening of the permanent Fort Bend location was delayed several months due to the pandemic, it saw success almost immediately, treating 114 patients from its opening in August through December 2020. The location’s success can be attributed to partnerships formed within the Ft. Bend community and the increased need for medical care during the pandemic.

San José Clinic administrators understood that the pandemic

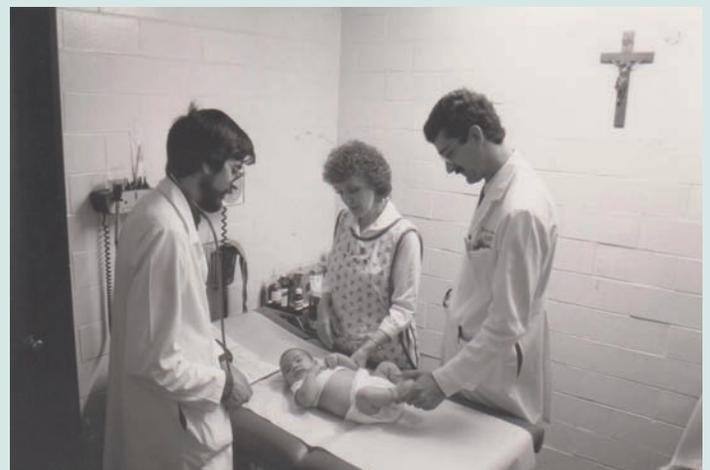
caused many to lose their jobs, so telemedicine visits and prescription refills required no payments. This act of generosity caused a dramatic loss in income for the clinic, made worse when the annual fundraising event, Art with Heart, was postponed to 2021. Dr. Michelle Herrera, current chair of the clinic’s board, offered a silver lining to the setbacks, saying, “One of the problems for the undeserved is getting access to us. ... I really believe almost everyone has a cell phone they can use to get in contact with their doctor [through telemedicine].”²¹ Dr. Herrera’s positivity is well-placed. Although incidents like the pandemic detrimentally affected millions of people, it also gave communities a chance to care for one another and develop solutions to similar challenges in the future.

A Long Road from 1909 Canal Street

The spirit of love and caring exemplified by the story of the little boy with the surgically repaired club foot is central to the identity of the San José Clinic and all of those who work and volunteer there. The boy stands among tens of thousands whose lives were changed by the service provided – those getting simple check-ups, mothers gazing into their newborn’s eyes, individuals needing minor procedures or major surgeries, evacuees suffering through Harvey’s floods, and those visiting with doctors on their telephone screen during COVID.

Through it all, the clinic has stayed true to its mission of helping those without access to adequate healthcare. Joe Goeters, grandson of the clinic’s cofounder Katherine Carroll, has fond memories growing up in and around the clinic on Canal. In thinking about those humble beginnings, he acknowledges the clinic’s work and legacy, “I’m so proud of what [San José Clinic] is doing today ... it’s just unbelievable.”²² ○

Grace Conroy is a history major at the University of Houston where she is an intern at *Houston History*. She also interns with the Center for Public History’s 100 Years of Stories and Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey projects.



Volunteer doctors and nurses at the San José Clinic make it their mission to see healthy infants grow up to healthy children and adults.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

“SAN JOSÉ SAINTS”: TREATING PATIENTS FROM HEAD TO TOE

By Grace Conroy, Caitlyn Jones, and Debbie Z. Harwell



From its earliest days, the administrators at the Mexican Clinic, now San José Clinic, recognized that addressing patients' medical needs alone was not enough. An individual's health depends on care for the whole person. It involves coordination of dental and eye care, pharmaceuticals, nutrition, physical therapy, mental health care, specialty care, and a host of ancillary services.

Inspired by the needs of Houston's Mexican American population when it opened in 1922, the clinic dispensed medications and had dentists volunteering there as early as

The local Sembradores de Amistad chapter held a fundraiser in 1970 to provide glasses for San José Clinic patients. Club president, Virginia “Vergie” Treviño, left, and fundraising chair Mrs. Roy Molina, right, walk with Beatrice Moreno proudly wearing her new glasses.

Photo courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, RGD0006N-1970-1270-01.

1924. Within the first few years, the clinic added specialty care that included optometry. Volunteer physicians conducted eye exams and dispensed free glasses with assistance from the local National Council of Catholic Women, now

the Charity Guild of Catholic Women. While early records are sparse, during the first nine months of 1937, dentists and optometrists performed 798 dental treatments and 1,202 eye examinations. Four “graduate pharmacists” filled 10,500 prescriptions, which were offered free of charge or on a sliding scale thanks to donations. In 1938, San José was the only place in Houston doing free refractions, a critical tool in diagnosing vision irregularities and assessing prescriptions for glasses.¹

Over the decades, the clinic has moved to new and larger facilities three times, including to its current location at 2615 Fannin in 2010. It has expanded its services with the help of volunteers and partnerships with local institutions. Sometimes services have come and gone and returned again based on the availability of specialists and volunteers, but the clinic’s commitment to maximizing its patients’ overall health has never wavered.

Dental

“You can’t get a job when you don’t have good teeth. It affects your eating, it affects your speaking, it affects your appearance. It’s very difficult to move forward in life if your teeth are bad, or if you’re in pain. ... The same with ophthalmology and optometry services. ... How can you work if you can’t see? ... How can you read something if you can’t see it? The optometry services for people in need are just a life-saver.”²

– Diana “Didi” Garza, Ed.D.,
former San José Clinic board member

Dental care is one of the long-standing pillars of the clinic’s services. When San José relocated to a new, larger facility at 301 Hamilton Street in 1956, the Texas Dental College donated two dental chairs and lamps but demand quickly exceeded the accommodations. In the 1960s, Dr. George

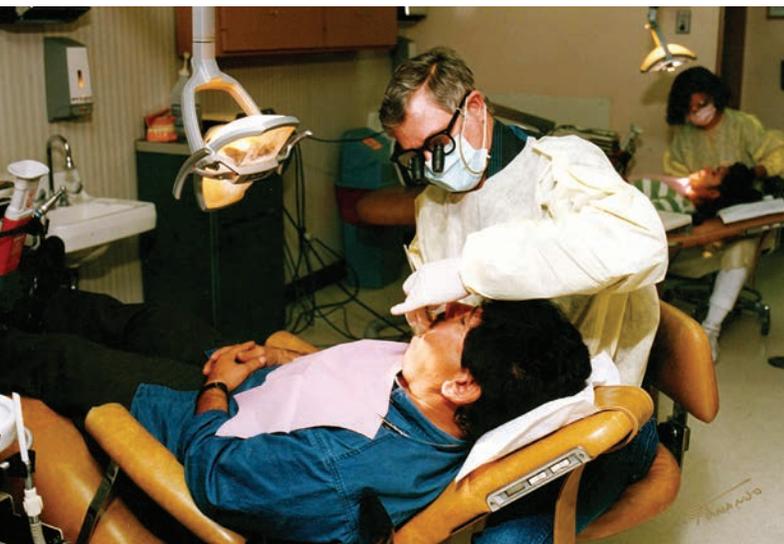


As part of their regular service, dentists in the Army Reserves volunteered at the clinic in the 1970s. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Quirk was recruited to volunteer at the clinic by his wife, Anne, who was a member of the Charity Guild of Catholic Women. The local dental association also required dentists to do community service, and the San José Clinic fit the bill. Dr. Quirk recalled patients sat in straight-back wooden chairs on which he clamped a “contraption” for a headrest that could not be adjusted. As a result, when patients put their heads back, “[dentists] had to bend over to get into their mouth.”

When the clinic expanded the dental area, it added about five dental chairs placed in a row. It was an improvement but not ideal. “The thing that bothered me so much,” Quirk noted, “was I’d be taking in an adult that had a full-mouth extraction ... and down at the end [of the row] was this young child waiting for his dentist to arrive. He was sitting there watching while I was doing surgery on this adult. I was so uncomfortable, I just felt so sorry for him.” Dr. Quirk eventually had curtains installed and was grateful when the clinic added two dental rooms with more privacy in 1975.³

To encourage dental health at an early age, the San José Clinic adopted community outreach programs, such as Dental Brush-In, Great Sugar Fast Day, and Sealant Day. The brush-ins began in 1969 to stress proper dental hygiene and provide free fluoride treatments. While the program ended in the 1990s, the clinic currently offers a similar program through Give Kids a Smile Day. Great Sugar Fast Day educated patients to avoid sugary foods to promote healthy eating, and Sealant Day provided free dental sealant, dental examinations, and teeth cleaning.⁴



Prior to remodeling, the Hamilton location had dental chairs lined up in a row, making it difficult to maintain patient privacy.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Various partnerships over the years enabled the San José dental clinic to meet the demands for care. In 1975, a group of dentists from the Army Reserves volunteered their expertise on Saturdays. They arrived dressed in battle fatigues, ready to assist patients in return for nothing more than the clinic's gratitude. A partnership with the University of Texas Dental School formed that same year, with dental students doing their clinical rotations at San José. Before that time, the clinic relied solely on volunteers, which meant if a volunteer could not come in, the patients had no one to see them. The dental students helped ensure appointments were kept, advancing the clinic's reliability.⁵

The late 1970s saw the creation of a denture program led by UT's Dr. DeYoung, who arranged with Stern Laboratories to provide dentures. Later Phifer Laboratories took over the service. The clinic's volunteer dentists registered the color, size, and impressions of the patients' teeth for the lab to create the dentures. Once patients received their dentures, they saw an improvement in their health, as well as a personal transformation.⁶

Former CHRISTUS Foundation president and current CEO of Northwest Assistance Ministries, Les Cave, reminisced



Dental volunteers discuss a patient's x-rays to determine an appropriate treatment. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

about a young man in his thirties who was taken aback by his changed appearance after receiving his dentures. For years his smile consisted of a few scraggly teeth, but now, a full set of straight, clean teeth sparkled at him in the mirror. In that moment of self-evaluation, the young man knew his whole life would change. He no longer had to worry about the ability to chew and, most importantly, how people perceived him. Sister Pauline Troncale, director of the clinic from 1990-1992, confirmed, "The dental was just so key because dentistry is so hard for people in the low-income group to obtain."⁷

Other partnerships and staff additions followed. In 1988, San José expanded its care to include a special dental clinic, hosted at Bering Methodist Church, for those suffering from AIDS. In 1992, the clinic named Jana Wood director



Members of the dental team celebrate Julie Hsiao' thirty-fifth anniversary at the clinic. The longevity and dedication of the clinic's staff members are part of what prompts patients to think of the San José as their home and family. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

of the dental department to ensure patients received comprehensive care on a continuing basis, keeping toothaches and cavities at bay. And the UT Dental School began providing a full-time hygienist alongside two dental students on Mondays and Wednesdays in 1994.⁸

The San José dental clinic continues to rely on community partners and relationships to maintain quality care and fill gaps when they arise. In 2019, when San José needed a new compressor and a vacuum – essential to operating a dental clinic – clinic CEO and president Maureen Sanders reached out to 1,600 dentists in the community for help, and they donated \$35,000 toward a replacement. She then worked with the vendor to cover the balance as an in-kind donation so patient services would not suffer. She insisted, "You cannot be afraid to ask for help. You have to [ask]."⁹

Optometry

"I always say you can't throw a rock in this town and not hit a dentist that trained at San José Clinic. ... and you can't find an optometrist in town that didn't train at San José Clinic. Those relationships are so long and deep-seated."

– Paule Anne Lewis, CEO San José Clinic, 2011-2018

Optometry services at San José Clinic followed a similar trajectory to dental care. The reliance on volunteers impacted the clinic services in the 1940s and 1950s. During World War II, the clinic lost many volunteers and had to cut back its services, but the post-war era saw a resurgence of visits in all areas, with optometry leading the way by the end of the decade. In 1953, during the Korean War, the volunteer doctor was drafted, and Baylor College of Medicine had a shortage of residents to fill the void. The clinic went seven months without an eye clinic until a doctor in private practice agreed to see patients at his



An optometry resident performs an eye exam for a clinic patient. The clinic has provided optometry services and assisted with glasses since its earliest days.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

office and refer them to the Lions Club for their glasses. By the following year, the clinic had resumed operation.¹⁰

The administrative structure of the eye clinic changed dramatically in 1980 when the University of Houston (UH) College of Optometry began training fourth-year students at the San José Clinic under the direction of Dr. Harris Nuessenblatt. Dean William R. Baldwin pointed out the importance of this outreach, “In the past, optometrists tended to wind up in the suburbs while our greatest need for health manpower has been in neighborhood clinics. The program fulfills a sense of responsibility to the community for this school and for the people personally involved.”¹¹

The arrangement benefitted the students who encountered – and learned to treat – acute eye conditions they would not normally see in general practice. The *Houston Chronicle* cited the example of one fourteen-year-old boy who had a severe eye infection that could have cost him his eyesight if left



Dr. Lloyd Pate completed clinical rotations at the San José Clinic while a student at the University of Houston College of Optometry. He continues to volunteer at the clinic and designed the optometry facility in the current building.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

untreated. Doctors also regularly identified other medical conditions during the eye exam, including tuberculosis and diabetes. Seeing the clinic as an oasis where patients are seen regardless of ability to pay, one grandmother waiting for her granddaughter to be seen was quoted in 1992, saying, “I thank God this is here. I don’t know where else I would go.”¹²

Dr. Lloyd Pate was a student at the UH College of Optometry when he was assigned to the San José Clinic for his clinical rotation in the early 1990s, and he has remained a stalwart volunteer. Of Mexican descent, he grew up speaking Spanish and felt a cultural kinship to the patients, some of whom he has kept up with and remembers fondly. Two of his patients from Central America came in with their mother who was legally blind. “The daughters would be like seeing-eye dogs for her while she drove. When they got old enough to reach the pedals, they would drive the car. ... Now

Maria Socorro Rouse was a longtime San José volunteer who was sadly struck and killed as she walked to work. In tribute, the eye clinic was named in her honor.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



one of the girls has a Ph.D. in chemistry, and she is supervising an analytical lab. ... The other one ... already had a master’s in nursing, and she’s looking at becoming either a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner.” He also had a patient who studied at UH and became an optometrist.¹³

Instrumental in improving the clinic facility at the previous and current locations, Pate has personally provided equipment to the clinic and checked out surplus equipment from UH many times. When the current clinic building was under construction, he designed the eye clinic’s floor plan in use today.

Pate sees his primary responsibility as providing the best care possible to his patients and supervising the students so that they also learn to provide excellent care. One of the biggest challenges, however, is the dependence on donations to provide for the patients’ needs. The clinic coordinates with other medical providers for diagnostic procedures like MRIs and with patient assistance programs for things like glaucoma drops that cost approximately \$200 per month. He explained, “It just takes a lot of effort being a social worker and a doctor and trying to get the treatment that the patient can stick to because it doesn’t do any good to prescribe a drug they’ll never be able to afford.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, the optometry providers have found a way to get the job done.

Today, the eye clinic is named the Socorro Rouse Memorial Eye Clinic in honor of Maria Socorro Rouse, a licensed vocational nurse who had volunteered at the clinic for fifteen years. Sadly, she was struck by a semi-truck as she crossed the street on her way to work. Rhonda Johnson, the clinic's nursing supervisor at the time recalled, "[Maria's] caring and compassion was the essence of the eye clinic, and she was very instrumental in creating a place for people who had special needs."¹⁵ That spirit remains true as the clinic aims to protect the eyesight of Houston's underprivileged.

Pharmacy

"You can prescribe the best medicines and order the fanciest tests, but if [a patient's] home situation doesn't support the things that you need them to do, they're food insecure, they don't have access to the healthy foods that you need them to eat to bring down their blood pressure or to lose weight or control their blood sugar, ... that really sets them up poorly."¹⁶

– Dr. Portia Davis, San José Clinic disease state management clinical pharmacist, associate professor of Pharmacy Practice, and interim executive director of Interprofessional Practice & Simulation at Texas Southern University

Historically, treatment regimens in many specialties at San José Clinic involved recommending medications and more. Pharmaceutical companies and hospitals donated medications, and by 1951, physicians contributed "many of the most recent and expensive antibiotics – to stock the clinic's pharmacy." But prescriptions given to parents of young children also included vitamins and cod-liver oil, or baby food, evaporated milk, strained vegetables, and cereals obtained by clinic staff and volunteers. Nurses then followed up with house calls to monitor children's health and ensure their mothers knew how to care for them.¹⁷

Today, the San José Clinic uses similar approaches to care for patients' overall wellbeing. Dr. Portia Davis, a disease state management clinical pharmacist at San José, trains students



Charles Ezeudu, a pharmacy student at Texas Southern University, examines an insulin device during a training taught by Dr. Portia Davis.

Photo courtesy of Debbie Z. Harwell.

who do rotations at the clinic and works closely with patients. She believes in the clinic's long-standing philosophy to treat the whole patient, considering their support system and home life. Davis describes the San José patients as fantastic. "They're just so thankful for any bit of time that you spend." She reflected, "I've had great relationships built with my patients and the [clinic] staff." Those relationships create trust so the patients can speak honestly about what does and does not work for them and be part of their own healthcare solutions.¹⁸

In difficult times, the San José Clinic has a reputation for stepping up to help the larger community with needed services. During Hurricane Harvey, the clinic opened up just six days after the storm hit to provide prescriptions and insulin to those who had lost theirs in the flood, to help supply the emergency shelter at the George R. Brown Convention Center, and to operate pop-up clinics, including one at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Rosenberg.¹⁹

During the coronavirus pandemic, pharmacy director, Dr. Adlia Ebeid, set up a drive-through pharmacy at the clinic's back dock so patients could stay socially distanced while taking care of their health. Knowing many patients had likely lost their jobs, the clinic also waived the patient contributions. And, as if the pandemic was not enough, when Hurricane Laura approached the Texas coast in August 2020, the clinic spent a week getting sixty- and ninety-day supplies of medication and insulin prepared for its patients.²⁰



The clinic operates a full-service pharmacy for its patients. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff shifted to drive-through service so patients could maintain social distancing.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Larry Massey, president of the Scanlan Foundation, related a personal experience that illustrates how the clinic goes the extra mile. He helped sponsor William, a homeless man, through truck driver's school. One of only three to pass the exam, William immediately received a job offer from a truck driving company but had to be in Atlanta the following Monday to start. Massey helped William get his medications, so he could get there on time, remembering, "San José Clinic moved heaven and earth. ... They saw him, they got him his diabetic meds and we got him on the plane the next morning



After contracting multiple sclerosis and losing her ability to walk and control her upper body movement, Valentina Quiroga, assisted by volunteer physical therapist Dr. Beverly Newman, stood for the first time in five years thanks to a Sara power standing lift device donated to the clinic. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

... He had no other place to go, and that's what San José Clinic does. It helps people who have fallen through the cracks, who have really limited options of their healthcare."²¹

Physical Therapy

"[The goal of physical therapy] is to get [patients] towards their highest level of function ... and get them back out there. ... [We do] not look at anybody as handicapped ... because that's a label that goes on to, 'I'm injured,' or 'I'm handicapped, so I can't do anything.' No, we don't accept that."

– Dr. Beverly Newman, volunteer and head of San José Clinic physical therapy

People also turn to San José Clinic for physical therapy (PT) for a host of reasons – an injury, an accident, a neurological change, or post-operative care – and the therapists address them all. The clinic does not have rows of expensive equipment, but Dr. Beverly Newman, a volunteer who heads up the PT department, is skilled at “hands-on intervention,” which she adds, “has been very, very successful at San José.” She teaches patients what to do at home, using the same skills employed in bigger facilities, just delivering them in a different environment.²²

Working with uninsured patients, Newman can devise a treatment plan that suits their schedules without an insurance company dictating terms. For example, rather

than being required to see a patient three times a week for four weeks, she can see a person once a month for six months if they choose, so the patient does not miss as many days of work.

The services offered can also be life changing. One of Newman's patients, Valentina Quiroga, was a young woman from Bolivia who had a good job until she developed multiple sclerosis and encephalitis that caused her to lose her motor functions. Challenged by the case's complexity, Newman first helped her sit upright, but she still could not stand, which is essential for circulation and weightbearing. One day, the clinic's volunteer coordinator reached out to Newman and described a piece of equipment someone wanted to donate. When Newman heard, she exclaimed, “Oh, my god, that's exactly what this young woman needs!” It was a Sara 3000 power lift device, in which the patient is secured and then stood upright. After five years of being unable to stand, Valentina was laughing, and her father was crying while watching her regain her footing. Newman beamed, saying, “She could stand, she could breathe better, her bones are better, and she was finally making a little bit of better progress.” Eventually, the family returned to Bolivia and took the frame with them.

While this type of case might not pass through the clinic every day, it is indicative of the care team members provide. As Newman concluded, “It is an environment that nurtures good dealings and a willingness to help.”²³

For a century, the San José Clinic has dedicated its time and resources to continuously seek out partnerships and advancements that expand its services and better serve its patients. The few memories highlighted here show the personal impact the clinic has had and exemplify the thousands of lives and hearts the clinic has touched.

When His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo first joined the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston in 2004, he visited San José Clinic, which was now under his charge. “It's been a genuine, beautiful part of the Archdiocese,” he affirmed, “[providing] effective, good care for those who are uninsured or under-insured and truly need the assistance.” *Houston Chronicle* reporter Bonnie Britt once referred to the dentists who volunteered at the clinic as “San José Saints,” but it seems appropriate to extend that title to all the providers who work to secure the wellbeing of everyone arriving at the clinic for care.²⁴ ○

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Respect, Dignity, and Making a Home

By Joseph Castillo

Home is one of the most powerful words in the English language. A house is not a home, home is where the heart is, there's no place like home. Home is where you rest, it is the people you trust, it is where you feel safe and find a sense of true belonging. To call something home is to label it family and a safeguard all at once. To

many Houstonians, the San José Clinic is a place so meaningful that only one word can encapsulate its importance: home.

Created in 1922, the San José Clinic (first called la Clínica Gratuita, then the Mexican Clinic) was established to help the children of Houston's Second Ward, also known as Segundo Barrio and El Alacrán, at the time, but more often called the East End today. Many of these children lived in homes with no running water, no paved roads, and with families who owned little besides the clothes on their backs. The community was composed largely of refugees – individuals and families displaced by the Mexican Revolution who were lucky to escape with anything and had traveled hundreds of miles for a little of the succor that the United States could provide in their time of need.²

What they received paled in comparison to what they expected to find, as often happens when people leave their

Pins added to the map above indicate the early clinic locations in Second Ward. Pin 1: 1900 Franklin (1922-1925); pin 2: 1909 Canal (1925-1954); pin 3: 1919 Runnels (1954-1956); and pin 4: 301 Hamilton (1956-2010).

Map from Alacrán essay courtesy of the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, MSS0352.044.

“There was this very spiritual quality about the clinic that I kind of fell in love with it. It felt like home to me.”¹

— Diana “Didi” Garza,
San José Clinic volunteer

homes for greener pastures. Despite their skilled craftsmanship, the quality of the education some had received in Mexico, or the work they were willing to contribute to building their new lives, many of these immigrants were given unstable, low-wage jobs. The places that could provide aid marked them as a lesser

priority or flat out refused to help and chalked it up to a difference of opinion or cultural mistranslations.³

So when a new clinic opened with its mission to help them specifically, the Mexican population noticed. Children and adults were finally able to see doctors who offered quality care and treatments when they were sick, helping reduce mortality rates in the Mexican community. Clinic services grew to include optometry, dentistry, pharmaceuticals, nutrition, counseling, and more. Even in recent years serving the uninsured, fees remain affordable, based on a sliding scale, and no one is turned away for inability to pay.⁴ Although founded to address needs in the Mexican community, the clinic served anyone unable to afford care and improved the livelihoods of thousands of people who would never forget it.

[The San José Clinic is] often referred to as a safety net clinic ... [T]here are a lot of nets out there but not all of them are very tightly woven. But when somebody lands in the San José Clinic, it's a tightly woven safety net clinic that catches them and takes care of them and doesn't let them slip any farther.

— Les Cave, CEO Northwest Assistance Ministries



Joe Goeters, grandson of clinic cofounder Katherine Carroll, recalled essentially growing up at the clinic on Canal, going there with his grandmother and his mother, Florence, who operated C & G Paper House in a warehouse next door. The clinic's community spirit made a life-long impression on him and his siblings who all spent time in education and service to the church.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

Oral histories collected to document San José's centennial reveal the biggest reason the diverse Latino community goes there is not the availability of care or even the price. It is because everyone who works or volunteers there puts everything they have into the care they give their patients. It does not matter what ethnicity you are, your income, or even your religion. The staff at the clinic treats everyone the same – as someone who matters. And how could they not? The clinic seeks to provide quality healthcare and education to people who have limited access to those services in an environment that respects each person's dignity.⁵

Dignity /'dignədē/ noun: the quality or state of being worthy of honor, or respect.

Houstonians live in a country where anti-immigrant sentiment has run unchecked in recent years, and in a city where 20 percent of the population lives in poverty, and



The San José Clinic offered vaccinations for children, which helped to improve overall health and reduce the mortality rates in the community. Former patients like Irma Galvan still remember and appreciate the care they received.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

almost one in five people are uninsured – the highest rate among large U.S. cities. Here, to be treated with respect is intoxicating. Stacie Cokinos, CEO of the clinic from 2001 to 2011 explained, “There’s something that’s so pure and sincere about the mission and how it hasn’t changed ... [T]he impact that it has on people’s lives is just pivotal.” To be told, “You matter,” and then be treated like you do is incredibly rare. Yet the clinic stands firm in its principles.⁶

“Even though our patients were only paying ten dollars or twenty dollars to get in, it didn’t matter... We treated our patients as if they had the best insurance plan and were paying \$1,000 to be seen every day. Because that’s what they deserve. ... That human dignity aspect was the watermark on everything that we did.”

— Paule Anne Lewis, San José Clinic CEO, 2011-2018

Respecting a patient's dignity can take many forms. It is remembering that the patients are people. It is remembering to say, “Mr. Jones is coming in,’ [because] he is not a knee patient, he is Mr. Jones,” physical therapist Dr. Beverly Newman explained.⁷ It is opening the clinic on a day it was normally closed to treat one little girl.⁸ It is assisting a man, who was just attacked and covered in blood, by calmly and kindly getting help.⁹ It is fighting for funding every day and refusing to raise the price for care.

This watermark, this respect for every person, flows in tandem with the beliefs and actions of the clinic staff. As clinic board member and assistant professor of nursing Michael Sullivan, Ph.D., pointed out, “You don’t go to the San José Clinic for a job because you can get a job anywhere. You go to the San José Clinic to serve.” And serve they do. The staff members are united in their battle to provide care to as many people as possible. As medical director Dr. Diana Grair, noted, “Everybody, of course, needs a job, needs an income, but you have different priorities.” In fact, nearly all of the medical providers are there pro bono, for free. Nobody on staff is there simply going through the motions, which Dr. Newman confirmed in saying the “people who work there want to be there. They want to help people.”¹⁰

Through high times and low, the clinic does its best to help. Practitioners volunteer for decades, such as Dr. Warren Bellows, Dr. James Lloyd, Dr. Mary Neal, Dr. Lloyd Pate, Dr. Susan Pokorny-Egolf, Dr. George Quirk, and Michael Sullivan, Ph.D. Kimberlyn Clarkson, chief advancement officer of the San José Clinic, pointed out these people donate their time because they care about other people: “[The] volunteer providers, along with [the clinic’s] staff, get to know a whole person. They know a family, and they make certain that they always reinforce that they are committed to that person and that family.”¹¹

The clinic provides much-needed levity through events such as Christmas parties that patients remember for decades, and over time the staff and volunteers have become beloved community members. When a disaster occurs, the clinic

shines like a beacon in dark times. In 2017 with the devastation from Hurricane Harvey, the San José Clinic opened its doors as soon as possible to help keep Houston afloat. From running pop-up clinics and providing shelters with medications and supplies to expediting the process of allowing out-of-state doctors to serve, the clinic did everything in its power to help. This was despite Harvey hitting the staff just as hard as everyone else. According to the CEO at the time, Paule Anne Lewis, “We had staff members that had lost everything ... [But] they came to work every day to see patients and to help patients and do their job.”¹²

This awe-worthy dedication is not done in vain. The patients remember and they come back to the clinic because “they always took care of us ... [and] everybody in the neighborhood,” recalled Irma Galvan, award-winning chef, and owner of Irma’s Original restaurant. “When I was a little girl, I remember the clinic, my brothers and sisters, the neighbors, we all got together and went for our shots.” To the community, the San José Clinic was more than just a clinic. It was a landmark, something that helped define the area alongside other powerhouses like Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and School. The clinic was something Second Ward natives such as Elias Cortina, now a member of the San José Clinic board of directors, knew would always be there for them.¹³

The 301 Hamilton location, which was the clinic’s home from 1956 to 2010, was both special and familiar. People could come in to heal their ills, but just as often it was a part of their home. Dr. Margaret McNeese recounted how “a lot of people came there ... because it was air conditioned [and] warm in the winter. It served as more than a clinic ... it was basically a gathering place for many, many people there.” Sometimes, the clinic resembled a street scene, she said, with



vendors. Some were selling food, and others spilled into the big waiting room or porch.¹⁴

Entering the building was entering home. The sisters

Clinic director Sr. Pauline Troncale arrived one day to find the lobby statue of baby Jesus wearing a stocking cap like those hospital nurses put on newborn babies. She felt a mother who had received her prenatal care at the clinic must have put the cap there as a token of gratitude for a successful delivery, reflecting, “We were grateful that we could provide that.”

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



Award-winning restaurant owner and chef Irma Galvan speaks with University of Houston student Celine Pineda about her memories of the San José Clinic and what it means to Houston’s Latino community.

Photo courtesy of Houston History.

and staff remembered the patients and their families, and the patients and families remembered the staff. It created a safe space, where a person could rest. At times, “it was a lively and caring place to be [where] activity was non-stop,” Cortina reminisced. It was a place full of love. “Love really held the bricks together,” Stacie Cokinos observed.¹⁵

For decades, the clinic stood in the heart of the East End, but as times changed it was forced to move with the construction of the downtown ballpark and the need to modernize. The new location makes the clinic more accessible thanks to the nearby rail line, allowing people across Houston to experience the clinic’s compassion just as El Segundo Barrio residents have since 1922.

The San José Clinic has been running for a century now, one of the oldest charity clinics in the nation, but it is a charity clinic that has not lost its way in today’s world. It has never forsaken its mission or resigned itself to giving lackluster care. His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo observed that from the beginning, the clinic has expanded its scope to provide “medical care for those whom Pope Francis would frequently call ‘on the margins.’ ... They like the closeness and the intimacy. They also come to the San José Clinic because they know they will be respected as persons.”¹⁶

To those who get to know the clinic, it is incredible, their work is admirable, and the care is invaluable. The clinic deserves to be celebrated as a place that treats people with dignity and respect – as home. Irma Galvan captured this feeling, “Mi gente [my people] – we help each other. San José, la Guadalupe, the neighborhood, Irma’s, Ninfa’s, we’re all part of El Segundo Barrio, and I feel like we’re all part of the San José Clinic. ... We cannot forget la clínica ... [We must] continue with the legend de la clínica because they’ve always been there for us.”¹⁷ ○

Joseph Castillo, a history student at the University of Houston, was born and raised in the Greater Houston area. As a first-generation American, he has always had his eyes open to issues impacting immigrant families and, on learning about the San José Clinic centennial issue, wanted to be a part of telling its story.

Pillar of Refuge, Honoring Maria Ramirez

By Joseph Castillo



In the forty years that she has been with the San José Clinic, Maria has watched the clinic grow and maintain its family-like community. Her devotion and ability to connect with patients in both Spanish and English make her a beloved member of the San José Clinic community.

All photos courtesy of the San José Clinic.

Born in Matamoros, Mexico, Maria Ramirez has been part of the San José Clinic family for forty years. She started out as a medical assistant and moved on to dental assistant, medical records, and patient check-in. We met on Zoom for an oral history to document the San José Clinic’s centennial celebration. We were both incredibly nervous at the idea of being in the spotlight and visiting over a webcam (per COVID regulations), but we persevered. Our conversation revealed not only Maria’s story but also what lies at the heart of the San José Clinic.*

When I asked about the changes that have occurred over the years, Maria began to talk about how, when she first started working at the clinic, they still used carbon paper – a thin sheet of carbon-coated paper used to make copies of written and typed documents – because computers and printers were not as widely used as they are today and definitely not by a small nonprofit like the clinic. When they did get newer equipment, she labeled it, “a good change, easier in many ways.”

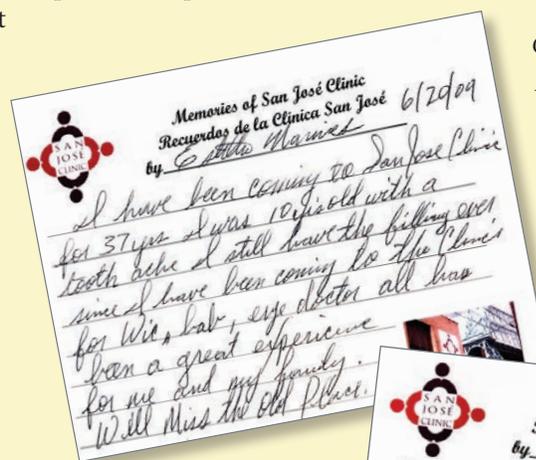
As we stumbled through our conversation, Maria began hitting her stride. We talked about the introduction of more technology such as x-ray machines, new specialties such as rheumatology, and how she felt about working at the clinic for so long. “It’s great!” she gushed. “I’ve been here forty years.

* All information in this story is from: Maria Ramirez, interview by Joseph Castillo, November 3, 2020, pending deposit, UH-Oral History of Houston, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

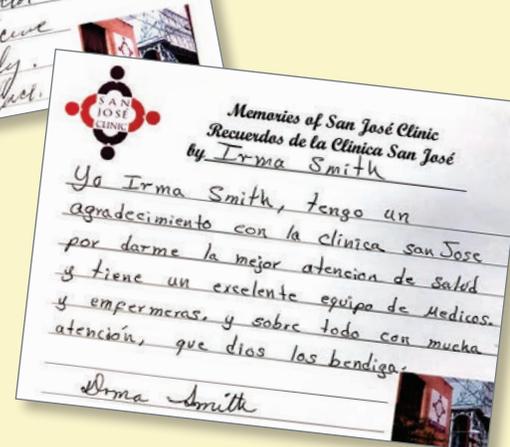
That tells you a lot.” She added, “When the volunteers come or when the students come, they’ll say, ‘Gosh it’s like a family here!’ Yeah, it is. It is like a family. It’s really amazing.”

We shifted to the Latino community, the importance of recognizing cultural differences in care, and the anxiety some patients feel when speaking in English. Maria has always translated for patients, and some doctors ask for her specifically. She knows how important these translations are, not only to let the doctor know what is happening but for the patient as well. “[The patients] learn to trust you,” she explained. “They know that I’m going to tell the doctor what they feel or how they feel because it’s not just a matter of interpreting or translating. You have to put the feelings into the words they tell you. ... They have to really see that your emotions are the same as theirs. It makes a big difference.”

This is a sentiment that I, a first-generation American, know intimately. The intent you have to convey, the idioms and non-translatable descriptors you have to quickly cycle through mentally, the tones, and the body language you have to filter to be understandable to both parties can make the responsibility of the interaction mind-boggling. Here was someone who took on the task to help as many patients as possible.



Comment cards gathered just before the Hamilton Street location closed show the patients’ attachment to the clinic and its providers.





The clinic's Hamilton location, where Maria worked for thirty years, was situated near Highway 59 on the east side of downtown. The Astros stadium, now Minute Maid Park, opened beside the clinic in 2000.

It was then I realized what a beloved member of the clinic Maria is to the patients. She is the person the Latina moms sought out because they trusted her to treat them and their families right. “I don’t like to brag – but they do [request me],” she recalled. “As a matter of fact, on some days when I don’t come, some of the girls will say, ‘Oh so-and-so asked for you.’”

To the San José Clinic patients, Maria Ramirez is not just a worker. She’s Doña Mari, a woman of respect they can lean on. Maria mentioned that sometimes fathers, husbands, and children come into the clinic for the first time and ask, “¿Doña Mari, quién es Doña Mari? (Mrs. Mari, who is Mrs. Mari?)” because they were told by their wives and mothers to go directly to her.

These patients remember her for years and lean on her in times of need. In a heartfelt story, Maria recalled a conversation she had with a young mother who came back to thank her:

“I once had a lady who had a little boy that had injured himself, and...[he] would say, ‘I want my mother! I want my mother.’ And the lady walked out. ... I go, ‘No! Your son needs you. You have to be there for him, I’m going to be here with you.’

“She goes, ‘But you’ll stay with me?’

“Yes, I’m going to stay here with you. But you need to stay with him because he needs you.’

“But I need you to stay with me!’

“I’ll stay with you.”

Maria reflected, “I’ll never forget this situation because she came back ... and she goes, ‘You know, Doña Mari? You taught me something. That no matter what, when your children need you, you have to be there! Even if it hurts you, what they’re doing, you need to be there.’”

For forty years Maria Ramirez has been a pillar for many patients at the San José Clinic. In their times of need she supported them. As the patients grow older, she points out, “the kids have kids and the kids’ kids. It does happen, and they do come back after so many years, they say, ‘You’re still working here?’” And she responds: “Yeah, I’m still here. Oh, it’s so nice to see your faces again.”

As the interview ended, I realized how Maria Ramirez – Doña Mari – symbolizes the clinic’s mission and standard

of care. I asked if she ever thought about leaving the clinic to work elsewhere, and she replied, “I wouldn’t go anywhere else ... I think my second choice, I’d come back again.” ○

Joseph Castillo, a history student at the University of Houston, was born and raised in the Greater Houston area. As a first-generation American, he has always had his eyes open to issues impacting immigrant families and, on learning about the San José Clinic centennial issue, wanted to be a part of telling its story.



For her many years of dedication to the San José Clinic, Maria Ramirez received a service award in 2020. For decades, she has comforted and guided patients who refer to her fondly as Doña Mari.



Sister Pauline Troncale, fourth from right, ran the San José Clinic from 1990 to 1992, with faith at the center of her work. She recalled once receiving an anonymous donation of a \$100 bill stapled to a blank sheet of paper. Later that day a mother brought in her son who suffered from severe heat rash because they had no air conditioning. The staff saw that as a sign and used the money to purchase the family a window air conditioner.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

Hometown Heroes – The Women Behind the San José Clinic

By Sarah Chikhani

In the early 1990s, Sister Annette McDonagh and Sister Pauline Troncale carpoled to work at San José Clinic in Houston’s Second Ward. Every morning, Sister Annette, a pharmacist in her seventies, would bless the clinic with a splash of holy water and pray that she would not make any mistakes. Recalling the story with a laugh, Sister Pauline, who was CEO of the clinic at the time, thought to herself, “Oh, gosh! Pauline, you should be sprinkling your whole office with holy water!”¹

Over the last one hundred years, the San José Clinic has evolved in every aspect. From the services it provides to its impact on the health and wellbeing of the community, all of this has happened under the leadership of women. The goals and values of the clinic have remained consistent throughout the years with a commitment to providing medical care to the impoverished, undocumented, low-income, uninsured, and underinsured residents of the Houston area. With approximately 25 percent of Texans lacking health

insurance and many falling below the poverty line, the San José Clinic has become fundamental to the community.²

Throughout the San José Clinic’s history, women have been involved in almost all the operations from fundraising to volunteerism, and they have always been at the helm, whether nuns or laywomen. This began with the Charity Guild of Catholic Women, who cofounded the clinic, and carried over to the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, who were trained in medical care and administration, and the professional businesswomen who have run the clinic over the last twenty-four years. By establishing, running, and supporting the clinic, these women established healthcare as a human right and protected the lives of other women, children, and families.

Charity Guild of Catholic Women

Although Monsignor George T. Walsh’s investigation into the high infant mortality rate of Mexican children in

Houston led to the creation of the Clínica Gratuita (later the Mexican Clinic and now San José Clinic) in 1922, he relied on the local chapter of the National Council of Catholic Women to help raise money to start the clinic. These women, who later organized as the Charity Guild of Catholic Women, operated in the Progressive Era tradition of social housekeeping that brought women out of the home and involved them in activities that made life better for their families and communities. Under the leadership of Katherine (Mrs. Lucian B.) Carroll and Theodora (Mrs. W. E.) Kendall, fifty-nine women contributed a dollar each to rent the clinic's first location at 1900 Franklin Street, while actively seeking out Houston doctors to donate their time to provide care. They also began sewing layettes for newborns to distribute through the clinic.³

As the demand for medical care among the poor increased, the San José Clinic moved twice and remodeled its building to expand its services, including general medical care, dental care, optometry, and women's healthcare, as well as nutrition, psychological, and chronic disease counseling. The 301 Hamilton location, for example, operated over half a century from 1956 to 2010 and expanded several times. Jean Phillips, cochair of the Charity Guild centennial committee and former San José Clinic board member, described it as impressive, not only "given how much equipment, and files, and materials, and whatever else you need to run a clinic that they crammed into such a tiny space, but also how efficiently it was run."⁴

Financially the Charity Guild of Catholic Women far exceeded expectations. They opened a consignment shop in Montrose in 1952 to support the clinic. By 1960, the guild had achieved nonprofit status and purchased the property for its current home at 1203 Lovett Boulevard. What began with an initial gift of \$59 ballooned significantly. The guild has donated over \$3 million to the clinic since 1982 and continues to make an annual gift. Additionally, the women have given in excess of \$6.3 million to 153 different charitable organizations dedicated to helping children.⁵ In addition



Anne and Dr. George Quirk have volunteered with the clinic since the 1960s. They have been Mr. and Mrs. Claus at the annual Christmas party since the mid-1980s, including the drive-through event during COVID.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

to the annual gift, the Charity Guild sponsors specific programs at the clinic such as its patient Christmas party, which dates back to 1927, and a back-to-school event that provides children with books and school supplies.

One of the key factors in the guild's success is that the women have always been a "sisterhood" dedicated to supporting each other, explained Mary Frances Fabrizio, a member of the Charity Guild centennial committee and former San José Clinic board chair.⁶ Their financial, philanthropic, and proactive contributions coupled with Msgr. Walsh's recognition of such efforts laid the groundwork for a successful clinic and charitable organization that have both blossomed over the last 100 years.

Auxiliaries

During the clinic's early years, few women had the opportunity for a professional education in medicine other than nursing, yet women provided much needed services. The Women's Auxiliary of the Harris County Medical Society, organized in 1919 by Mrs. S. C. Red, promoted a year-round education program in the area. By the time the local auxiliary reached its fiftieth anniversary in Houston, it was thriving and sponsoring activities like a movie benefit in support of its varied projects, including the San José Clinic.⁷

Anne Quirk, a member of the Charity Guild of Catholic Women and the auxiliary for the Houston Dental Society, observed that "all the [auxiliary] ladies were willing to serve." Dentists were required to do community service, such as volunteering at the San José Clinic, and the women telephoned doctors' offices and created service journals every month, including an honor roll for those who had served at the clinic. The ladies met at a friend's home, going over a list of needs and calling the dentists they knew in the area to volunteer. Anne's husband, Dr. George Quirk, was



The Charity Guild hosted the first annual Christmas party for the clinic in 1927, and it has carried on that tradition even since, with aid from other partners. Volunteers gather, as they did here in 2018, well in advance to wrap gifts, and prepare games, crafts, and treats.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

one of the dentists recruited to the San José Clinic on behalf of the ladies' efforts. He began volunteering in the 1960s and remained until his retirement in the early 2000s but continued to consult. In addition, Anne pointed out the dental auxiliary worked on outreach in the community, using "women in many capacities ... to get the dental health needs across to the public and to the children."⁸

As a group, the women, some of whose husbands practiced in other specialties, united and served in different capacities. One lady's husband was a podiatrist who enlisted podiatry volunteers to work at the clinic. Furthermore, auxiliary women, Quirk explained, "brought their skills from their husbands' businesses or from their churches to [serve on] the board because the ladies had the time to come to these meetings."⁹ This allowed the clinic to continuously advance by bringing in volunteers and staying on top of medical care. The auxiliaries – made up solely of women at the time – represented another group of all-female organizations that played a fundamental role at the San José Clinic in terms of volunteerism and cohesion.

Ministries of Healing

Initially, Charity Guild member Theodora Kendall took on a leadership role at the clinic until the late 1930s when Mrs. Arthur Clark, a registered nurse trained at St. Mary's Nursing School in Galveston, began serving as the clinic's superintendent. Clark volunteered her time through World War II, keeping the clinic open with a skeleton staff. After the war, Bishop Christopher Byrne asked the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who ran St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Houston's Fifth Ward, to take over management of the clinic, which they did under the direction of Sister Mary Leonardine and Sister Mary Manuela on October 1, 1946. The congregation, based in New Jersey, stepped in as the clinic unexpectedly grew at a rapid pace and needed more experienced direction. After years of quality leadership, the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception felt they needed to provide more assistance to St. Elizabeth Hospital and resigned from the clinic's management in 1954.¹⁰

Bishop Wendelin Nold, who succeeded Bishop Byrne in 1950, then turned to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate



Sr. Annette McDonagh joined the clinic as a pharmacist in 1985 and started each day by sprinkling a little holy water in the pharmacy to prevent mistakes.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

Word, a Houston congregation, to run the clinic. The organization had been working in Houston since 1886, when the Sisters of Charity first entered into an agreement with Harris County Commissioners Court to provide care for the sick. From the time these women took over management of the San José Clinic in 1954, they put forth tireless efforts toward their patients, and they have remained involved with the clinic, even after laywomen began serving in the director's position in the late 1990s.

The longest serving director, Sister Teresa (1966-1985) was described as a large woman who always wore a white habit. Anne Quirk noted, "She was afraid of nothing. She could handle anything that came in the door." Having a strong, resilient woman as a leader behind the clinic for an extended period of time certainly played a role in the clinic's success. She and Sister Clara, her assistant who oversaw the dental clinic, were among the dozens of dedicated clinic staff members that lived at St. Joseph's Hospital Convent when they worked at San José Clinic.¹¹

The clinic and its community partners implemented programs to help mothers and children, such as OBGYN services; the Women, Infants, and Children program (WIC); and support groups for women experiencing emotional stress. University of Texas Health Science Center (UT Health) professor Dr. Margaret Carter McNeese served as chairman of pediatrics at the San José Clinic in the 1980s and continued to volunteer after that. She worked in partnership with the clinic and UT Health to create a WIC program at the clinic by 1982. WIC safeguards the health of low-income women, infants, and children under six by providing nutrient rich foods, information on healthy eating, and referrals to healthcare. This service, which continued into the early 1990s, was a fundamental attribute for struggling single mothers and families, whose children were found to be anemic due to poor nutrition. The clinic touched the lives of these patients in a setting where patients felt comfortable. Dr. McNeese recalled, "from the nuns all the way down to the patients, it became family." Dr. McNeese was honored by the Charity Guild of Catholic Women for her notable contributions to the clinic in 1982.¹²

Sister Annette, who often gave clients free medication,



Sr. Angela Lamb became the new clinic administrator in 1954.

Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.

is one of the many women behind the clinic who offered medical care coupled with a special dose of endearment, tenderness, and genuine care. In 1986, the *Houston Chronicle* reported, “a 54-year-old woman walked into San José Clinic where patient fees averaged \$4 per visit. The woman paid nothing for the three-month supply of medicine the pharmacist gave her to control her diabetes and other problems. The medicine normally sells for \$75 wholesale.”¹³ She and thousands of other patients experienced improved health outcomes from the clinic’s combination of medical services and empathy the sisters offered behind the scenes.

Sister Margaret Bulmer, who served as clinic director from 1985 to 1990 and from 1992 to 1998, was beloved by the staff members and patients alike. She made a lasting impression with her empathy and ability to make everyone feel at ease. Not only did she serve the clinic’s patients, but she also brought in those she saw outside the facility in need of medical care. To support equal care for all, she advocated for a study to see how more of their patients could qualify for Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁴

Sister Margaret remains a humanitarian. Recently, she visited a mural honoring Houston native George Floyd, who was killed in May 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by a city police officer who knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes. She reflected, “It crossed my heart several times, prompting me to pray for him and his family.” Moved to pay her respects at the mural in his historically black Third Ward neighborhood, she wrote, “George Floyd grew up so very close to us here at the Villa de Matel [home to the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word]. In fact, it took me nine minutes to drive there. As short as my little pilgrimage was, it seemed to lead to a distant land, where the roads

were littered and crumbling, where homes were shuttered or tumbling. Reaching the mural, which is painted on the side of an old corner market, I saw and sensed more keenly in those streets the racial disparities that were a part of why and how George Floyd died. It was sad and sobering.”¹⁵

The dawn of the twenty-first century saw more changes, and it was women who navigated these waters. Directors Stacie Cokinos, Paule Anne Lewis, and Maureen Sanders have brought the clinic into the modern age with the advent of email, electronic patient records, and additional medical partnerships – including membership in the Texas Medical Center. And, perhaps most importantly, in partnership with CHRISTUS Foundation, the San José Clinic moved to a new, state-of-the-art building, which has enabled it to expand patient services.

The contributions and hearts of the women behind the San José Clinic are reminiscent of Nobel Peace Prize winner Mother Teresa, who is best known for her work with the poor in India and founder of the Missionaries of Charity. She worked on building nursing homes, hospices, and shelters for orphans and sought help for those in need. Her extensive work is reflective of the women who similarly gave of their time and raised money to help the poor in Houston by providing medical care through the San José Clinic. Their contributions have changed thousands of lives, although the women frequently operate behind the scenes.

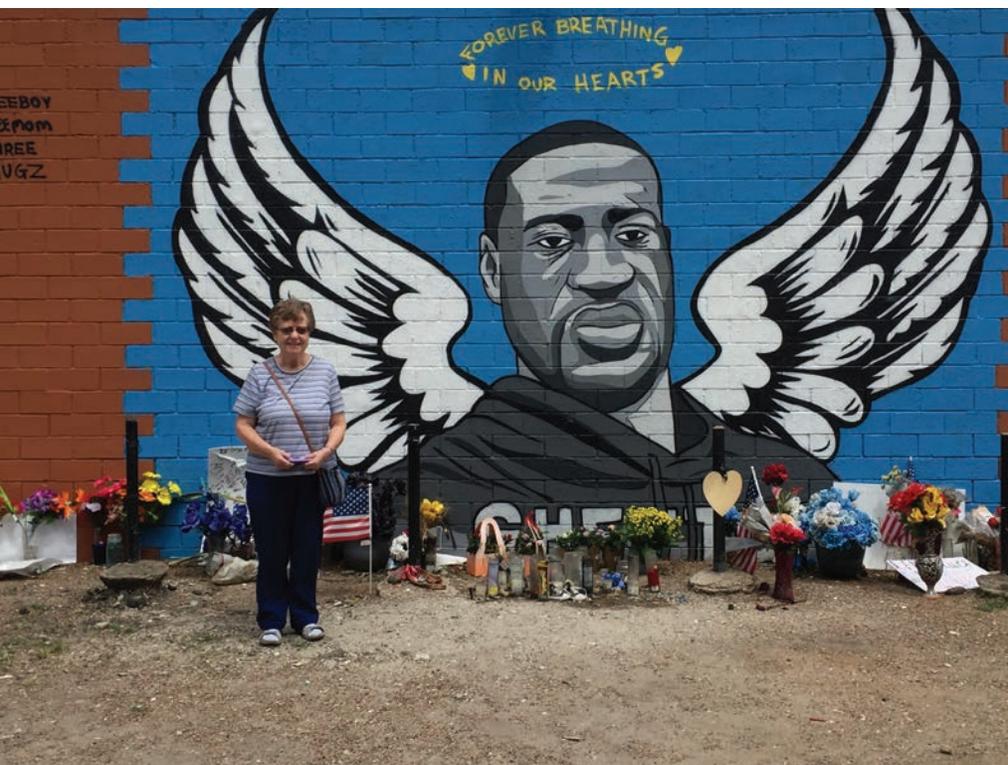
The San José Clinic’s authenticity lies within its pure and sincere spirit of togetherness, its bond of sisterhood, and the familial relationship formed with the patients. This hidden jewel has been steadfast for one hundred years thanks to the women who have served there. The San José Clinic owes much of its longevity to the women from the Charity Guild

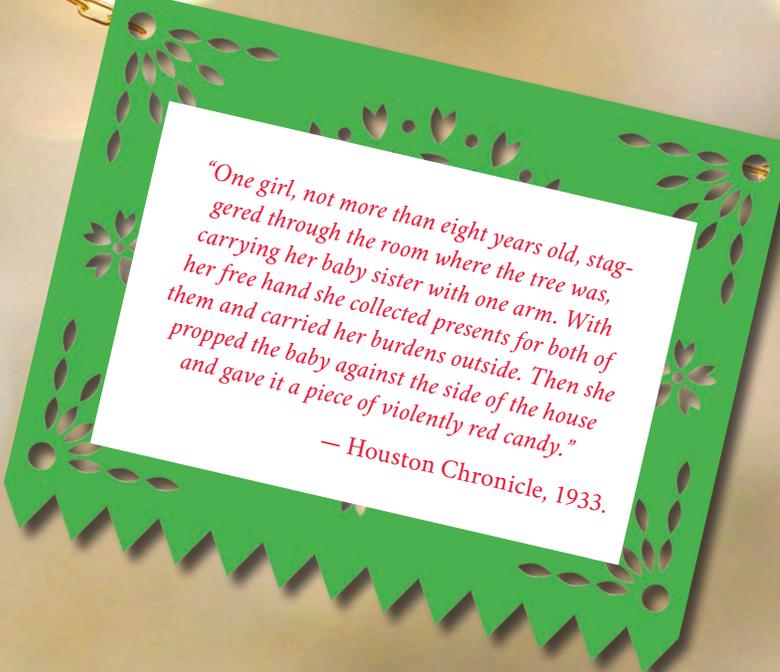
of Catholic Women, to the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, the directors, auxiliaries, and volunteers. They worked to further the cause of women and families through their leadership, strength, compassion, and business acumen that enabled the clinic to grow and minister to those in need. ◉

Sarah Chikhani is a senior at the University of Houston majoring in history with a minor in law, values, and policy. She plans on attending law school upon graduation in hopes of becoming an advocate for those without a voice.

Sr. Margaret Bulmer served two stints in the 1980s and 1990s as the director of the San José Clinic. Beloved by staff and patients alike, she has remained committed to social justice as her reflections on visiting the George Floyd memorial in Houston’s Third Ward illustrate.

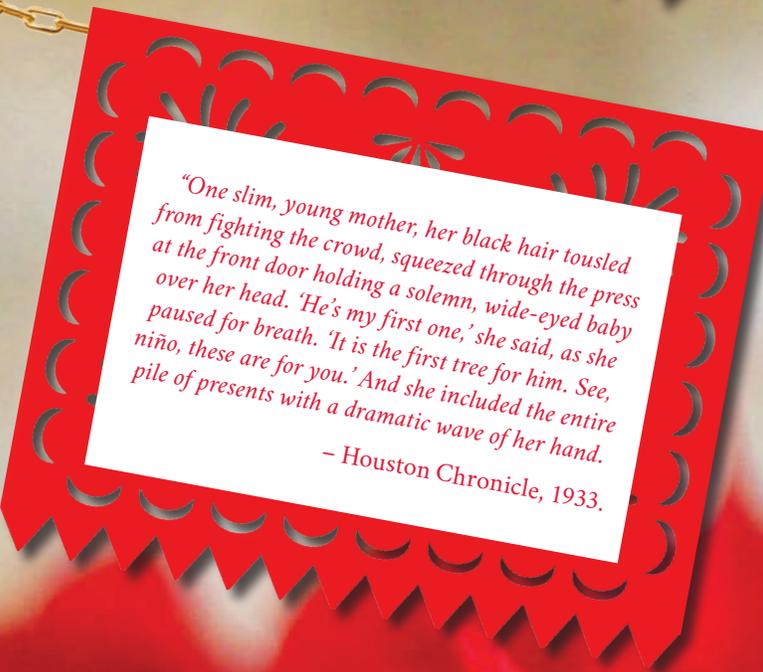
Photo courtesy of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.





"One girl, not more than eight years old, staggered through the room where the tree was, carrying her baby sister with one arm. With her free hand she collected presents for both of them and carried her burdens outside. Then she propped the baby against the side of the house and gave it a piece of violently red candy."

— Houston Chronicle, 1933.



"One slim, young mother, her black hair tousled from fighting the crowd, squeezed through the press at the front door holding a solemn, wide-eyed baby over her head. 'He's my first one,' she said, as she paused for breath. 'It is the first tree for him. See, niño, these are for you.' And she included the entire pile of presents with a dramatic wave of her hand."

— Houston Chronicle, 1933.



"I remember being there with my mom, my aunt, and my cousin, ... and we each received a small gift. To this day, I remember my gift. It was one of those red plastic baseball bats with the little plastic ball. It was just nice to have that little extra gift and experience with the clinic."

— Elias Cortina, patient family member and San José Clinic Broad of Directors member.

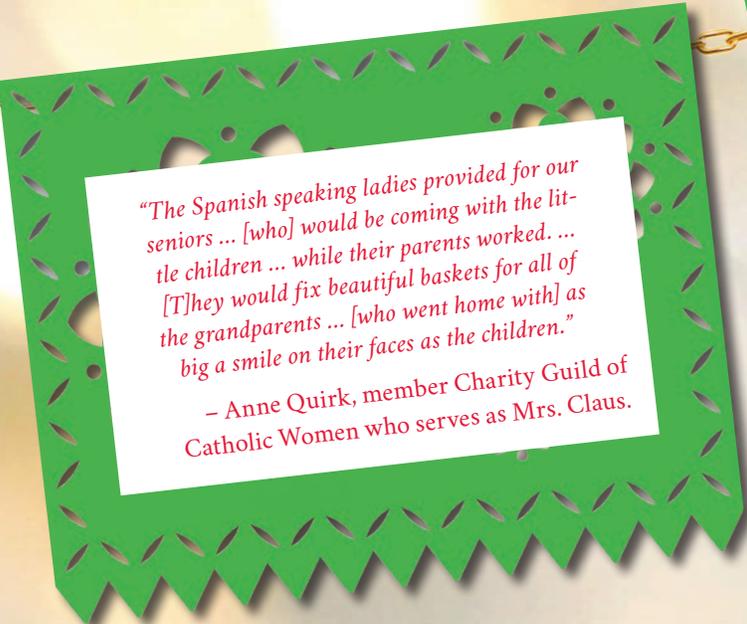
"A Magical Time":

By Celine Pineda

Just five years after the San José Clinic was established in 1922, the local chapter of the National Council of Catholic Women (now the Charity Guild of Catholic Women) began hosting a Christmas celebration for patients and community members, many of whom went without during the holidays. Approximately 300 children attended the first gathering, with infants receiving clothing and toiletries and other children visiting Santa Claus, who gave them toys and bags filled with candy, fruit, and nuts. By 1933, as many as

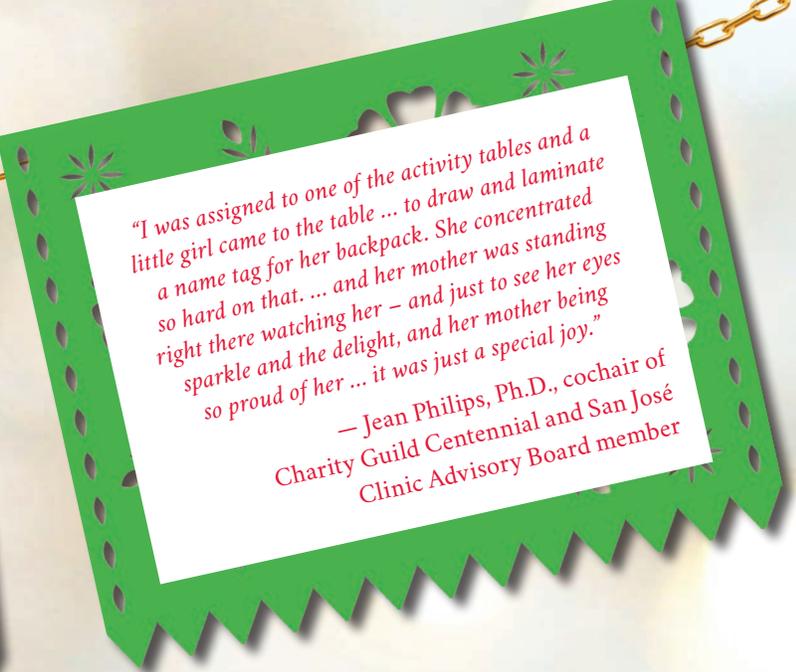
a thousand children, all registered at the clinic, waited with their parents to receive their treasures and celebrate the occasion with friends.¹

Since 1927, those affiliated with San José have gathered in the weeks before the party, collecting and wrapping gifts, chatting over hot chocolate, and sharing prayers of thanks. They spent hours decorating, preparing treats, creating crafts and games, and obtaining food gift cards for the parents to spread Christmas cheer and assure



"The Spanish speaking ladies provided for our seniors ... [who] would be coming with the little children ... while their parents worked. ... [T]hey would fix beautiful baskets for all of the grandparents ... [who went home with] as big a smile on their faces as the children."

– Anne Quirk, member Charity Guild of Catholic Women who serves as Mrs. Claus.



"I was assigned to one of the activity tables and a little girl came to the table ... to draw and laminate a name tag for her backpack. She concentrated so hard on that. ... and her mother was standing right there watching her – and just to see her eyes sparkle and the delight, and her mother being so proud of her ... it was just a special joy."

– Jean Philips, Ph.D., cochair of Charity Guild Centennial and San José Clinic Advisory Board member



"A little boy [was] standing there with his mother, and he had a rather large box in his hands. It was still in the gift-wrapping paper. I said to him, 'Are you going to open your present?' and he said, 'No, I'm going to save it for Christmas morning.'"

– Mary Frances Fabrizio, former San José Clinic board chair and Charity Guild Centennial Committee member.

Christmas at San José Clinic

their patient families that the larger community supported them. Even during COVID-19, volunteers and staff arranged a drive-thru celebration where they handed out gift cards for food and toys, and children received a bakery box with sugar cookies and all the trimmings to decorate them to their heart's content, donated by Pierpont Communications.²

Over the past 100 years, the San José Clinic has witnessed how low-income communities struggle in Houston. The

annual Christmas party leaves a lasting impact on young and old alike, demonstrating the clinic's dedication to the people it serves. Former clinic CEO Stacie Cokinos recalled, "To be able to gather the patients, their children, [and] the volunteers, it was ... always a magical time."³ ○

Celine Pineda is a third-year history student at the University of Houston. She is president of the Indigenous Awareness Association and campus advocate for the education and celebration of Indigenous history and culture.

ON A WING AND A PRAYER: HOUSTON NONPROFITS SUPPORT SAN JOSÉ CLINIC'S MISSION

By Grace Conroy

\$59. Fifty-nine dollars is all it took to open one of the longest-running charity clinics in the United States.

When Monsignor George T. Walsh decided to start a clinic in 1922 to battle the high infant mortality rate in Houston's Mexican community, he knew who to call on for help. With approval from Bishop Christopher Byrne, Msgr. Walsh reached out to the local National Council of Catholic Women, now the Charity Guild of Catholic Women, to aid in this endeavor. Theodora (Mrs. W. E.) Kendall, the first president of the National Council of Catholic Women, and clinic cofounder Katherine (Mrs. Lucian) Carroll each pitched in one dollar and rallied fifty-seven other council members to do the same. With these funds, they rented a frame house at 1900 Franklin Street for the Clínica Gratuita, later renamed the Mexican Clinic and then San José Clinic.¹



Sister Teresa celebrates United Way Day alongside a San José Clinic doctor, a young patient and her mother. United Way of Greater Houston's predecessor, Community Chest, began supporting the clinic in 1928.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

The first of several organizations that have supported the San José Clinic across eight decades or more, the Charity Guild continued to champion the clinic as it moved to 1909 Canal Street in 1925 to accommodate the rising number of patients. The guild women also sewed layettes for the patients' newborn babies, inspiring them later to open a consignment shop as a "blueprint for raising money." After eight years of success, the Charity Guild shop received nonprofit status in 1960. Today, the consignment shop is run by an all-volunteer staff, enabling the guild to donate to charitable organizations such as San José "by rendering assistance to children in need in the greater Houston area, regardless of race or creed."²

The Charity Guild remains a loyal donor to the San José Clinic. In 2022, the Charity Guild of Catholic Women will celebrate a century of dedicated service to the Houston community – beginning with its devotion to the clinic.

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

The mission of the San José Clinic is to provide healing through quality healthcare and education with respect and compassion for those with limited access to care. To accomplish this, the clinic depends on other larger nonprofits, such as the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, to provide funds to cover its operating costs. The clinic also reduces expenses through in-kind contributions it receives from medical providers, pharmaceutical companies, and community partners.

Without Bishop Byrne's concern and the dedication of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston in 1922, the San José Clinic might not exist today. The Archdiocese, which owns and provides financial assistance to the clinic, has been a constant supporter and source of spiritual leadership. During Bishop Byrne's thirty-two-year tenure, the number of Catholic churches in Houston grew from eight to twenty-eight. In turn, the clinic has been treated with kindness and devotion by five bishops. In several instances the Archdiocese gave to a specific cause, such as in 1990, when it donated \$10,000 for San José Clinic's Maternity Department.⁴ Over its history and the past few decades, specifically, the Archdiocese has donated generous sums for operating expenses through the annual Diocesan Services Fund (DSF).

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, who became ordinary of the Archdiocese (an officer who provides pastoral governance) and the overseer of the San José Clinic in 2004, observed that the clinic operates today in the "same exact spirit" that it did 100 years ago. "It's been a genuine, beautiful part of the Archdiocese, and we're very proud, and we'll do



Members of the Charity Guild merrily decorate the outside of their consignment shop for the holidays.

Photo courtesy of the Charity Guild of Catholic Women.

anything to keep it going.” In 2020, given the difficulties of COVID-19, Cardinal DiNardo thanked those who “valiantly weathered [San José Clinic’s] 98th year of supporting uninsured brothers and sisters in need of quality healthcare.”⁵

United Way

In 1928, Houston’s Community Chest, now United Way of Greater Houston, became a financial backer for the fledgling Mexican Clinic. For almost a hundred years, United Way has strived to create a safety net for residents facing circumstances such as poverty, natural disasters, and inadequate medical care. Like San José Clinic, United Way also hopes to improve lives through better access to healthcare and by providing resources to build a stronger community.⁶

Former United Way president and CEO, Anna Babin, observed firsthand how the organization invested its time and resources into the San José Clinic. Early in her career, Babin worked as an internal auditor for United Way. In this role, she spent three weeks viewing the clinic’s facility and ensuring it was a safe and secure environment. She also checked that the clinic was properly appropriating the United Way funds. Babin’s overall analysis was that the clinic was an endearing environment where “these gentle giants of sisters really care[d] for the poor.”⁷ Babin is one of many to witness the charisma of the Sisters of Charity as they carry out the ministry and mission of the clinic.

United Way has continued to invest in the clinic because it is a “safety net for the poor.” It remains one of the San José Clinic’s largest donors, averaging approximately \$650,000 in each of the last five years.⁸

Scanlan Foundation

The Scanlan Foundation, established in 1947, is another enduring benefactor of the clinic going back seventy-four years. The foundation’s name honors Thomas “Tim” Howe Scanlan, an Irish immigrant who moved to Houston in 1853. Scanlan was a successful businessman who made his money in real estate and oil and became one of the city’s wealthiest men by the time he died in 1906. A faithful husband and loving father of ten, Scanlan’s two defining qualities were his acts of service to

the community and his devotion to Catholicism. His two sons did not survive infancy, but his eight daughters – Marguerite, Mary Ellen, Caroline, Charlotte, Alberta, Katherine, Lillian, and Stella – grew up following in his religious fervor. Upon Scanlan’s passing, they acquired a multi-million-dollar joint estate. Although he left no will designating his wishes, his daughters knew them by heart and abided by them.⁹

Scanlan’s daughters had equal shares in his joint estate, with the consensus that after they had passed away, the estate would go toward “charitable and educational endeavors of the Catholic Church.” The sisters also practiced this ideal throughout their lives. One sister used Scanlan’s wealth to support the Annunciation Church, and another belonged to the Charity Guild of Catholic Women that helped fund the San José Clinic. All remained firm in their Catholic faith throughout their lives. None of the sisters married or had children, and they chose to remain mostly hidden from the public. Even in their generosity, the sisters provided out of love rather than for publicity.¹⁰

In January 1947, the surviving sisters, Lillian and Stella, created the Scanlan Foundation, born through a trust in their wills. After Lillian passed away in September of 1947, her will declared Stella Scanlan, Louie Linnenberg, and Walter Brown as the trustees of the Scanlan Foundation with the mission to support “Roman Catholic religious, charitable, and educational purposes within Texas.”¹¹

After Stella died, the Scanlan Foundation continued on the path that she and Lillian envisioned. In 1956, the foundation gifted \$160,000 to construct the San José Clinic’s new building at 301 Hamilton Street and, in the 1960s, gave another \$100,000 to renovate and double its size. The foundation recently awarded San José Clinic a \$250,000 “impact grant” for its satellite location in Rosenberg, southwest of Houston in Fort Bend County. The branch opened in 2020 after the clinic’s leadership identified a need for ongoing



Bishop Wendelin Nold and Bishop John Ludvik Morkovsky attend the groundbreaking of the San José Clinic’s new addition at Hamilton in 1969.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



In January 1947, Tim Scanlan's last surviving children, Lillian and Stella, founded the Scanlan Foundation to honor their father's wishes to support the Catholic Church's charitable work. Shown left to right are three of Scanlan's ten children: Kate, Lillian, and Stella.

Photo courtesy of the Scanlan Foundation.

medical care in the area when they responded to a call for help during Hurricane Harvey. The foundation's long-term commitment was especially evident when oil prices plummeted to about \$38 a barrel in 2014 and 2020, impacting the foundation's income. Nevertheless, foundation president Larry Massey reflected, "It pinches. But we made a point to always make San José Clinic a priority, and we have sustained that through good and bad times."¹²

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word

Another inspiring group of Catholic women whose support has impacted the San José Clinic is the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. On June 4, 1954, the clinic came under the supervision of the congregation at the request of Bishop Wendelin Nold. Sister Angela Lamb was installed as the clinic's new administrator and Sister Dominica O'Halloran became the supervisor at the clinic. The Sisters of Charity remain involved with San José Clinic on an administrative level and a financial one through the CHRISTUS Foundation for Healthcare, whose mission and vision of "extending the healing ministry of Jesus Christ" cements the legacy of the congregation through the "promotion of health and welfare of people in need."¹³

In 2006, CHRISTUS sold St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston, which had long cared for San José patients. Even so, the foundation remained committed to the clinic that desperately needed a new facility. Thus, with both the foundation and the clinic in need of new homes, CHRISTUS began a \$14 million building campaign to construct a new facility to house its office and the clinic, which would lease its space in the building for one dollar per year. The CHRISTUS Foundation president at the time, Les Cave, described the process. "As we were raising the money," he remembered, "we were meeting with architects and builders ... to start putting in place what the clinic was going to look like, how much space we needed,

how much space San José Clinic needed." After meticulous planning, the clinic moved into its new state-of-the-art facility at 2615 Fannin in 2010, enabling an expansion of services and elevating its reputation. Annually, the CHRISTUS Foundation for Healthcare donates over \$800,000 in in-kind contributions such as rent, utilities, and general building maintenance, and a member of the Sisters of Charity serves on the clinic's board of directors.¹⁴

Large Donors Working in Concert with In-kind Donations

Although the San José Clinic depends heavily on donations, it also relies on in-kind contributions from Houstonians and medical equipment and supply companies. Under this unique model, volunteers who offer their time and support, such as medical practitioners, provide a significant portion of the in-kind contributions. This allows donations to go toward general operating expenses rather than doctors' salaries. In 2019, the clinic's 684 volunteers donated 20,877 hours valued at \$694,522, and in-kind contributions totaled \$6.6 million. In 2020, even amid a global pandemic, in-kind services reached over \$5.1 million.¹⁵

In addition to the groups mentioned above that have served the clinic for eight decades or more – other local organizations have offered critical support. Houston Methodist Community Benefits, M.D. Anderson Foundation, the Strake Foundation, CHI St. Luke's Health Foundation, and others provide sums for general operating expenses, medical practitioners, the new satellite location, medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, lab work, and other needs. Much of the clinic's success is owed to the financial support, reinforcement, and advocacy of all these organizations. For nearly 100 years, the San José Clinic has dedicated its mission to caring for those with unfortunate circumstances. And to think, this journey began with a single idea and \$59. ◻

Grace Conroy is a senior history major at the University of Houston. She is an intern at *Houston History* and the Center for Public History's 100 Years of Stories and Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey projects.



Clinic director Sr. Teresa, with the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, and Loy Sudhoff, chairman of the San José Clinic board, break ground for a new addition at the 301 Hamilton location in 1974.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

FUNDRAISING WITH HEART: The Inspiration Behind San José Clinic's Annual Fundraisers

By Grace Conroy

People have come together to discuss important ideas and shared interests since the ancient Greeks and Romans. While these original assemblies centered around politics, the modern assembly might call for deliberation, entertainment, education, or worship.¹ When considering ideas for fundraisers, the San José Clinic's leadership understood that creating an open environment for conversation about the clinic would attract donors and potential volunteers. They hoped to design events that would draw Houstonians to the San José Clinic through shared interests and then introduce them to the clinic and its mission.

The idea for Art with Heart came about one afternoon in 2006 during a lunch date between two friends. Barb Holman, a San José Clinic board member, knew that the clinic needed to place a stronger focus on fundraising. Holman quickly thought of her friend Larry Massey, a devout Catholic with almost forty years of banking experience, as someone who could help the clinic conceive new, innovative approaches to fundraising. Massey always knew he wanted to leave the world a better place than he found it, but he was a busy man, and Holman had difficulty convincing him to visit the clinic. She eventually succeeded and Massey, after viewing the facility and learning about the organization's purpose, did indeed introduce an idea.²

Massey recognized that other people might also feel overwhelmed by taking time out of their busy schedules to participate in fundraising. To overcome this, a fundraising event would have to provide ample opportunity for participants to

escape the monotony of day-to-day life. His idea was to create a formal gala that would draw potential donors to the San José Clinic with a silent auction of art created by local artists.

Art with Heart's debut in 2007 grossed approximately \$50,000 for the clinic.³ The overall response to the gala was one of enthusiasm – with guests amazed by the art and glad to learn their donations were helping a good cause. Following this initial success, Art with Heart became an annual spring fundraising event that utilizes live and silent auctions to showcase artwork and jewelry by artists.

Each year, the gala celebrates one of the clinic's supporters with the Portrait of Compassion, an honor given to those who have shown exceptional commitment to the clinic and its patients. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the 2020 Art with Heart was canceled, but it celebrated its fourteenth anniversary on May 8, 2021, with a gala at the George Ranch Historical Park. Jill Reese, San José Clinic's senior events and communications coordinator, pointed out that the venue allowed guests to gather in a socially distanced outdoor space, "wearing boots and cowboy hats underneath the Texas sky."⁴

Another clinic board member, Philip Morabito, loved the notion of Art with Heart and wished to create an annual fall fundraiser to bring further awareness to the clinic. Morabito believes people should only participate on charity boards if they genuinely plan on making a difference by devoting their time, resources, and talents. When he joined the board of the San José Clinic, he resolved to do

Over 300 people attended the Art with Heart event in 2018, which raised \$215,000 from the sale of artwork, some of which is shown here.

All photos courtesy of the San José Clinic.





Philip Morabito specializes in public relations, public affairs, investor relations, and marketing – skills that served him well as a member of the clinic’s board of directors and inspired his idea for the annual Fall Speaker Series.

Larry Massey, founder of Art with Heart, at left, joins advisory board member John Hernandez at the charity event. Massey received the Portrait of Compassion award in 2017 in recognition of his advocacy for the San José Clinic.



just that. He introduced a luncheon speaker series where medical professionals could present on current healthcare issues. Morabito felt that an easy-going environment, such as a luncheon, would bring interest to the clinic without placing pressure on the attendants. The goal of the Fall Speaker Series was to invite guests and doctors alike to learn more about San José Clinic and become affiliated with the organization as volunteers or donors. Morabito also hoped that the series would inspire the luncheon attendees to participate in Art with Heart, or vice versa. Although Morabito’s primary motivation for the Fall Speaker Series was drawing attention to current healthcare issues, he found himself pleasantly surprised by the monetary benefits to the clinic.⁵

On average, approximately 300 people attend the Fall Speaker Series that raises about \$70,000 annually. Over the years, the series has brought awareness to several important healthcare issues. For example, from 2016 to 2021 topics have included the value of community health and expanding healthcare access, Houston’s model for medical growth, bridging gaps and cultural barriers in healthcare, the uninsured during Hurricane Harvey, healthcare during a crisis, and the nexus of science, healthcare, and policy.⁶

In 2019, the series introduced the Groundbreaker Award to recognize exemplary acts of generosity by an individual or organization to benefit the clinic. Memorial Hermann received the first award for donating the modular building for the Ft. Bend clinic. In 2020, Bank of America was recognized for donating PPE, hand sanitizer, masks, and grant funds at the height of the pandemic. And, in 2021, Philip Morabito was honored for his idea to create the San José Clinic Advisory Board, which offers former board members a way to stay involved at the end of their terms and prospective members an opportunity to learn more about the organization, creating an added layer of support for the clinic.⁷

The success of the San José Clinic’s annual fundraising events is astonishing. In the six years prior to the 2020 pause for the pandemic, Art with Heart and the Fall Speaker

Series amassed approximately \$1.5 million for the clinic.⁸ To accommodate patients’ finances during the pandemic, San José Clinic revised fees for visits and medication refills, which meant reduced revenues coming into the clinic. Despite this setback, the community showed support through continued fundraising during these trying times.

It is inspiring to see how these fundraising events have contributed to the general operating fund and enabled the clinic to fulfill its mission on a daily basis. It is equally inspiring to see how they have fostered relationships between the community and the clinic. The annual fundraisers provide the perfect opportunity for individuals with shared interests to assemble and establish further connections. Art with Heart and the Fall Speaker Series are merely two examples of how the San José Clinic has brought life-long participants, donors, and volunteers to their cause. ○

Grace Conroy is a history major at the University of Houston. She is an intern at *Houston History* and the Center for Public History’s 100 Years of Stories and Resilient Houston: Documenting Hurricane Harvey projects.



At the 2017 Fall Speaker Series, William F. McKeon, Texas Medical Center president and chief executive officer, spoke with Houston Business Journal president Bob Charlet about building innovative healthcare communities.



Celebrating the San José Clinic Centennial and Looking Forward to the Next 100 Years

By Alondra Torres

In a U.S. healthcare system trying to service hundreds of millions of people, many find themselves living without access to proper healthcare. Yet, people in need of medical attention cannot risk falling between the cracks. The San José Clinic, Houston's original safety net clinic, opened its doors in 1922 with a mission of helping the underserved. Since then, the clinic has dedicated itself to addressing key issues for marginalized communities, such as the growing rate of uninsured Texas residents, always molding to the present needs of its patients. During the past 100 years, the clinic has survived economic downturns, natural disasters, and rapid population growth as it adapted to the ever-changing landscape of a developing metropolis, earning a reputation as home to many who seek its services.

As the clinic prepared to celebrate its centennial, students in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston conducted interviews with members of the San José community. In these conversations, former patients, board members, volunteers, staff, funders, and

administrators reflected on the clinic's accomplishments, the people it serves, and their hopes for the future.

Since its founding, the San José Clinic has functioned under a nonprofit model, securing medical tools from local donations, partnering with Catholic charities and businesses, and recruiting volunteers from hospitals, universities, and the medical community. The road to the 100th anniversary has not been easy. The clinic has suffered through drought and abundance alike, particularly with funds. Stacie Cokinos, former clinic executive director and CEO (2001-2011), experienced two economic recessions and the transformative reliance on technology during her tenure. She recalled the economic downturns "increased the need" among Houstonians who lost their health insurance when they lost their jobs. As patient needs increased, so did the clinic's financial need. When faced with this adversity,

The San José Clinic opened its facility at 2615 Fannin in 2010. The state-of-the-art facility accommodated 27,940 patient visits in 2019 and in 2020, during the pandemic, provided 18,662 visits, including drive-through services.

Photo courtesy of Wes Jackson, Ph.D.



Chris Palombo, center, the CEO of Dispensary of Hope, which provides pharmaceuticals to safety-net clinics, and community pharmacy resident, Dr. Randall Flores, right, meet with San José CEO Maureen Sanders in the clinic's pharmacy.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

the clinic did not simply accept the turmoil. The staff instead relied on hard work and their spiritual foundation to bring in additional funds. Cokinos remembers a couple of times when “there was no money in the bank account, and yet, payroll was coming [due] ... [I]t was just a huge act of faith. We would pray payroll in, and a grant would arrive just in time ... it was just pretty miraculous.”¹

The clinic has done more than adapt during times of hardship. It also embraced a new era of technology and used it to improve patient care. Through community work, the clinic has thrived, even opening a new location in Rosenberg in Fort Bend County, southwest of Houston, in 2020.

The San José Clinic has touched many lives and will continue to transform many more in the next 100 years with its generosity and adaptability. As Houston grows exponentially, so will the needs of millions of residents.

The idea for the Fort Bend County location was born out of relief efforts the clinic conducted during Hurricane Harvey. With help from the Scanlan Foundation and Memorial Hermann, the branch clinic opened in August of 2020.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.



The clinic will need to harness the talents that have allowed it to persevere, as well as welcome the changes to come. Looking to the future, staff, volunteers, and patients alike hope that the clinic continues to expand its services and facilities in a variety of ways. For example, Les Cave, former president of the CHRISTUS Foundation and current CEO of the Northwest Assistance Ministries, hopes that the clinic “takes their high-quality, high-compassionate care to more parts of Houston and Harris County and even Fort Bend County ... because the need is growing faster than [the region] can provide the services.”²



Dr. Portia Davis, left, from Texas Southern University's Department of Pharmacy Practice, works with clinic patients and students, such as Charlotte Nguyen from the University of Houston, who are doing their clinical rotations at the San José Clinic. Here Davis demonstrates a variety of insulin devices to students.

Photo courtesy Debbie Harwell.

Dr. Portia Davis – a disease state management clinical pharmacist at the clinic, associate professor in the Department of Pharmacy Practice, and interim executive director of Interprofessional Practice at Texas Southern University – wants the clinic to become “better equipped with the resources that are needed in this ever-expanding healthcare arena.” She especially hopes the clinic expands its partnerships with medical providers that will give San José Clinic patients access to treatment for serious health issues like cancer. Most importantly, Dr. Davis acknowledges that the clinic is not a hospital system; but referring patients to the right medical facilities will help them “continue their care, and once they’re healthy enough, [they can] come back to their medical home [at San José].”³

Similarly, the clinic’s medical director, Dr. Diana Grair, would like to expand clinic specialties such as gastroenterology, pulmonology, orthopedics, and pharmacology – departments that San José Clinic does not have currently. She sees it happening as a next phase for the clinic, when it can be done in “collaboration with the local residency program so that we can serve as a preceptorship [where students are supervised in a clinical setting], so that they can bring their specialty clinic and see our patients.”⁴ Expanding



Dr. Diana Grair and her husband enjoy the 2021 Art with Heart at George Ranch. Dr. Grair joined the clinic as medical director in 2017 and works to expand its services through collaborations with the medical community. Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

the clinic's specialties is crucial in guaranteeing its patients receive the same quality of care for the same low price, and do not end up financially burdened by services provided at larger medical facilities.

Alongside expansion, most interviewees' hopes for the clinic in the next 100 years included funding. Maureen Sanders, current president and CEO of the clinic, looks forward to establishing an endowment for the clinic. "If we can collectively get the board, the staff, our existing donors, the Charity Guild, the Sisters of Charity, everybody on board to create this endowment and put in place some financial stability for the future – that's my number one priority," she explained.⁵ Creating an endowment for the San José Clinic is an ambitious and important goal in the clinic's strategic plan.

Nonprofits often live "paycheck to paycheck," Sanders noted, and the clinic has been no exception for the past ninety-nine years. Having a reliable source of income from the endowment to support the daily operations would

ease the tension surrounding money each year and allow the board and healthcare workers to focus more on the quality of care, expanding services, serving more people, and growing in other aspects. Dr. Michelle Herrera, the current board chair, vigorously echoes Sanders's sentiment and is helping with the endowment campaign she hopes will secure "the next hundred years for the clinic."⁶ Considering all that the clinic has done so far without an endowment, a stable financial future should allow it to set an example and inspire other healthcare providers with its leadership and compassion.

The clinic's endowment campaign is not the only effort taking place to secure funds. The San José Clinic values its donors and hopes they deepen their involvement. Stan Marek, a Houston businessman, philanthropist, and former board member for the CHRISTUS Foundation and Catholic Charities, noted that parks and museums receive vast donations, as much as \$50 million, and he hopes that "somebody steps up and says, 'Here's \$10, 15, 20 million. Let's see if we can make a difference with the poor.'"⁷ A donation of that kind could inspire a landslide of donations directed toward helping the clinic, those in need of healthcare, and those living in poverty.

When asked about their dreams for San José Clinic in the next 100 years, many hoped the clinic will no longer be needed. Although the clinic provides a template for caring for the underserved, Kimberlyn Clarkson, the clinic's chief advancement officer, noted, "Of course, we hope that in a hundred years the underserved don't exist." Paule Anne Lewis, former CEO of the clinic (2011-2018), agreed. Her vision for the future includes a clinic "where they have no option but to take insurance, or at least federally or state-subsidized insurance plans," because everyone will be insured. Such a change would force the clinic to happily change its business model to fit a more universal healthcare system.⁸

The San José Clinic has always dedicated itself to serving the poor and uninsured in the belief that healthcare is a basic human right. Former board member Diana "Didi" Garza, Ed.D., passionately expressed her feelings, saying, "I believe that healthcare is one of those things that everybody should have access to. So, in a perfect world, we would not have to have places like San José ... [T]he goal in my heart would be ... that San José Clinic would become part of the healthcare system of the United States, and people would still be welcomed to come and get healthcare services that they need when they need them."⁹ Equal access to healthcare is the ultimate, perhaps unattainable, goal of many people who serve the clinic, and they will hold onto that hope in the next 100 years.

Equal access to healthcare transcends physical health in people's lives. It can also mean the ability of a patient to



During Hurricane Harvey, the clinic assisted in parts of the Houston region where people could not access medical care, including Brazoria County where they conducted over 250 patient care visits.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

maintain their job and for children to continue going to school. Elias Cortina, a member of the clinic's board of directors, stressed the unfortunate current situation. "Until we have some type of national healthcare that really is there for everyone, we're going to need these types of clinics that help provide preventative care to help keep people healthy and out of the emergency room and out of serious degradation of health," he said. "If you're not healthy, you can't learn, you can't work. That's why I think it's so important to do that. Again, I think that's what Jesus would have taught, right? That you have got to help others."¹⁰

Given the slow progress toward equal access to healthcare for everyone, the clinic's supporters hope it can venture outside of Houston and serve people in need on a national level. Larry Massey, president of the Scanlan Foundation and former San José Clinic board chair, believes that the clinic's model is "something that could be transported across the country." He added, "It is definitely an answer, or at least one of the answers, to the healthcare crisis."¹¹

Achieving a well-known national status would be an enormous feat for the San José Clinic, but the uniqueness and endurance of the clinic comes from its innovative volunteer model. Admiring the clinic's deftness, Cortina attributes much of the success to "keeping an agile mindset within the clinic to make sure that we continue to think creatively and pivot and adjust to things, to factors, and the situations coming at us [the clinic]." He believes that mindset will bring the clinic to another centennial.¹²

Although the clinic has a loyal base of volunteers, donors, and patients, it has struggled with gaining the attention of the media to tell its story and to increase awareness of its services. Along with the rest of the San José community, Sister Pauline Troncale, former clinic director (1990-1992) and a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, hopes that the clinic builds on its foundation and tells its story. As a director, she said, "I felt like I was talking all the time for United Way [a major donor to the clinic], and I'd go out and speak and try to get the story out there." Following a similar example in the next 100 years would "give energy to the future and say [the clinic has] come a long way in healthcare and in serving the poor."¹³

Gaining media attention has long been a strategy for nonprofits to attract donors and expand their outreach to the desired demographics. Former board member, Robert Parsley, who followed his father in service to the clinic, believes the clinic's biggest challenge is getting proper recognition for the services it provides. The clinic is often regarded as the "best kept secret" in Houston. The problem is that it does not want to be a secret. While the clinic has accomplished a great deal and become highly regarded over the past century, media attention can help the clinic reach its future goals. Getting the word out can help secure



His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston enjoys the festivities at the 2021 Art with Heart.

Photo courtesy of the San José Clinic.

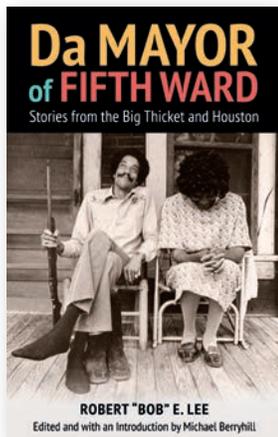
the clinic's financial stability, expand its volunteer base, inspire others in healthcare, and reach more people in need. Dr. Herrera also noted that the clinic will need to develop a clever marketing plan to stimulate these efforts. The ability to showcase available services and community events would significantly increase the clinic's reach to more people in need.¹⁴

Through faith-based work, the clinic has managed to reach a milestone few nonprofits achieve: the celebration of its centennial. In the clinic's 2019 Annual Report, His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo wrote that the clinic's triumphs could be attributed to "the dedication of the many volunteers, staff members, and charitable supporters." He added that with their support, "San José Clinic may look forward to another 100 years of providing high-quality, dignified healthcare to our friends and neighbors."¹⁵

In the next century, the clinic hopes to bridge the health gap between the privileged and the uninsured population who often fall between the cracks of a challenging healthcare system without the clinic's help. With dignified services and generations of volunteers, donors, and patients, the clinic leaders believe they have the people in place to accomplish the clinic's future goals to save lives and establish a culture where health is a priority. Finally, the San José Clinic hopes to celebrate yet another centennial of helping those in need. ◊

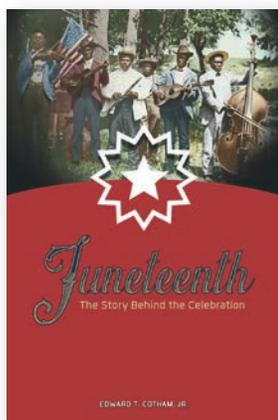
Alondra Torres is a senior history major at the University of Houston with a keen interest in the lack of accessibility to healthcare and resources, particularly in the Latinx community.

BOOKS



Da Mayor of Fifth Ward: Stories from the Big Thicket and Houston, Robert “Bob” E. Lee, edited and introduced by Michael Berryhill (Texas A&M University Press). Houstonian Bob Lee spent his life fighting for social justice across the country and across the community, especially in his Fifth Ward neighborhood. After Lee passed in 2017, author, journalist, and professor, Michael Berryhill edited fourteen stories written

by Lee that appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* from 1989 to 2000. The essays recount Lee’s experiences and lessons in life from the time he was a teenager to “meditations on the mysteries of death.”



Juneteenth: The Story Behind the Celebration by Edward T. Cotham Jr. (State House Press). In 2021 Juneteenth became a federal holiday, 156 years after the reading of General Order No. 3 announcing emancipation in post-Civil War Texas. Noted Civil War historian of the Houston-Galveston area and preservation advocate Ed Cotham digs into the origins and meaning of Juneteenth in the book, which is hailed as the “first

scholarly book” to look into the holiday’s history. The book’s release not only coincides with the holiday but also opens the door to have important discussions about the roots of racial injustice and tensions that remain today.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pam Francis Photographs: Musicians will open November 13, 2021, to January 10, 2022, at POST HTX 401 Franklin Street in Houston.

The Pam Francis Photographs exhibition, showcased in the spring magazine, has been rescheduled for April 19-26, 2022, at the Blaffer Museum on the University of Houston campus.

100 Years of Stories: Documenting a Century at the University of Houston is an interactive public history initiative grounded in UH student research, that showcases the important role the University has played in shaping the city. The project was sparked by an initial grant from Carey C. Shuart and is being developed in collaboration with the UH Center for Public History, Houston Public Media, and UH Libraries Special Collections. Visit <https://bit.ly/3upctRj>.

IN MEMORIAM

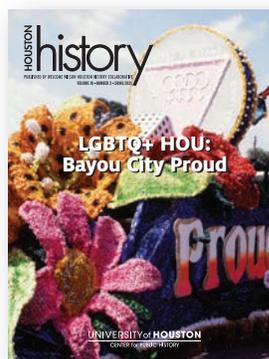


Marsha Van Horn, our dear friend and the *Houston History* magazine’s designer since its inception, passed away on August 28th from complications following cancer surgery. Marsha gave the magazine its signature style as it transitioned from a journal to the full-color popular magazine we know today. She worked tirelessly

to ensure the design supported the integrity of the historical research contained in the articles in an appealing way. *Houston History* editor Debbie Harwell recalled, “Marsha and I worked on thirty-two magazines together and became friends in the process. I will miss her wisdom, her vision, and even our banter over what looked better on the page.” Here is one of our favorite layouts from Marsha’s repertoire.



THANK YOU!



The magazine staff wishes to thank our panelists for taking part in the launch of the spring magazine, LGBTQ+ HOU: Bayou City Proud. Participants included Judy Reeves, curator and cofounder of Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of GLBT History; Brandon Wolf, feature story writer for *OutSmart Magazine*; Harrison Guy, founder of Urban Souls and the Charles Law Community Archive; Erika

Thompson, community liaison at the African American Library at the Gregory School; and Timothy Vale, history doctoral student at the University of Houston. Not only did they offer a stimulating discussion on their efforts to preserve LGBTQ history in Houston, they had all contributed to the magazine content in some way. We are grateful to work with such amazing community partners!

From Fear to Faith: The Founding of the San José Clinic

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- 3 "Infant Mortality Rates High During June, Report Reveals," *Houston Chronicle*, August 11, 1922, 11.
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- 20 His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, interview.

San José Clinic Establishes its Place in Houston's Medical Mecca

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