



# WELLNESS MATTERS

2019-2020 | VOL. XXIII

# STRONGER TOGETHER

## A MESSAGE FROM KARISSA

With our scenic beauty, exquisite culinary offering, and diverse cultural events, it is no wonder that Sonoma County consistently ranks as one of the top places to live and work. For me, one of the most exciting things about Sonoma County is our sense of community and our commitment to work together to better meet the needs of all in our county. There is still so much work to do in order to ensure that every resident enjoys health, equity, and overall well-being, but I firmly believe that when we combine our resources and strengths we have the capacity to drive broader social change – deepening our collective impact. I want to celebrate a few of the exciting new partnerships that we have grown in the past year that will help us to drive that change.

Redwood Credit Union’s mission is deeply rooted in serving the community, and they have been a longtime supporter of the Center. This year we were happy to give back to our valuable partner by bringing the Center’s nutritional expertise to RCU’s Grove Café, located within RCU’s SR headquarters. On the “Reddy Recommends” healthy choices menu, café patrons will now find heart-healthy items that meet nutrition criteria established by the Center’s dietitian team and Grove Café Chef Brian Gilbaugh. We are delighted by this new opportunity to support the offering of nutritious and delicious meals for our community.

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Amy’s Kitchen has goodness as their guiding principle, and they champion a healthy workplace for their employees. This year we partnered with Amy’s Kitchen to provide our evidence-based nutrition services on-site at the Amy’s Santa Rosa campus, and employees can now partake in the Center’s diabetes classes as a covered health benefit. Healthy employees are happy employees, and we are committed to helping empower the wellbeing of Amy’s team through our chronic disease prevention services.

We share more about this year’s collaborations in the pages of Wellness Matters, highlighting partnerships with St. Joseph Health and Santa Rosa Community Health that allow us to bring integrated wellness services to more Sonoma County residents. Every individual deserves to live a healthy and active life, and we are thrilled to expand access to our services for the well-being of our community.

This is an exciting time. There is still so much work to do to address the health inequities and socioeconomic disparities that exist in Sonoma County today, but by leveraging our resources and working together, we can create a healthier, more equitable, and more vibrant community. We are a resilient community, and we’re stronger together!

In partnership and health!

Warmly,



**KARISSA MORENO, MA**  
Executive Director



**On the cover: Project TRUE (Teens R U Educated?) Peer Leaders**

# COMBINING OUR RESOURCES FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY!

For many patients transportation is a barrier, and seeking services outside of their medical home or immediate neighborhood can be a real challenge. The best way we can support our community is to meet people where they are at—both literally and figuratively. We are thrilled to partner with Santa Rosa Community Health to do just that—bringing our nutrition and health education services directly to their campuses. We are providing our American Diabetes Association (ADA) recognized

*“It’s phenomenal. A tremendous asset to have integrated care—care that’s patient-centered and linguistically and culturally appropriate. A great opportunity to lower barriers to care for complex patients.”*

*Hannah Watson, MD Provider at SRCH*

diabetes education to the Lombardi Gestational Diabetes clinic twice a week, and we are offering weight management classes in English and Spanish at the Dutton campus. This is an exciting collaboration, as the Center is a leader in individual self-management (SM) practices – a key component of chronic disease management. SM practices are widely recognized as an evidence-based and patient-centered strategy that is proven to improve outcomes; however, providers rarely have the time to implement this strategy during their visits. These newly-integrated services allow for the Center and SRCH to leverage what we each do best for the health and wellbeing of our community. We’re stronger together!

We’re excited to help the



build a healthier future for people across Sonoma County.



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## VICTIMS OF VAPING

According to the CDC, teen cigarette smoking has dramatically declined over the last few years; however, youth vaping of tobacco has increased 78% from 2017 to 2018. This alarming statistic represents over 3 million American teens using e-cigarettes. In response to this rising teen vaping epidemic, the Center's Project TRUE (Teens R U Educated?) has taken action.

Project TRUE is a youth driven, peer health education program that addresses the impact of social inequalities, mental health issues, and substance use, recognizing that youth with adverse childhood experiences and lived trauma are at greater jeopardy for risk-seeking behaviors. Peer Leaders are trained in harm reduction strategies, and they are empowered to help their peers make successful decisions through outreach, presentations, and positive social norms campaigns.

Many teens are under impression that vaping is not harmful, a persistent myth that has helped to fuel the recent increase. Based on a campus-wide needs assessment, Project TRUE students at Windsor High School and Roseland University Prep created an age-appropriate presentation tailored to students in 4th-6th grade, reaching over 700 Sonoma County elementary school students. The presentations included information on how vaping works, what a vape device looks like, the dangers of vaping, the effects of nicotine, how vapes are marketed to youth through flavoring, and more. The presentations provided a forum for open dialogue without judgment, and students proved to be extremely curious and asked several questions. Principal Jenny Young of Sheppard Elementary applauded these efforts, saying that "The presentation was eye-opening and students walked away with a much better understanding of the negative impacts of vaping."

Project TRUE's scope of influence extends beyond Sonoma County, with Project TRUE students advocate



Project TRUE Peer Leaders advocating for safe tobacco retail at the California State Capital

at a public policy level for safe tobacco retail practices statewide. Our students traveled to the State Capitol as part of the annual YouthQuest Conference protesting the aggressive marketing of vaping and flavored tobacco at youth. One of our Project TRUE students, Ralph Manalac of Windsor High School shared "My experience attending YouthQuest made me feel like I was a part of making the change for a vape and tobacco-free generation." Project TRUE students will continue their work to combat youth vaping during the 2019-2020 school year, with the goal of reaching even more students in order to help them make healthy, informed decisions that will put them on track to succeed in school and in life.

Strong tobacco retailer licensing (TRL) laws have proven to be effective at limiting youth access to tobacco and provide a framework for implementing and enforcing other tobacco control policies that can advance health equity—including policies to counter predatory tobacco industry tactics that disproportionately target underserved communities. In addition to our work in helping to educate students across Sonoma County about the dangers of vaping, the Center is working hard to educate voters, Health Action advocates, and elected officials about the need for stringent TRL laws in order to keep our communities safe and healthy.

## BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

### Surani Kwan, FNP, DNP



Surani Kwan is a force of nature – as anyone who knows her would agree! In addition to her role as Director of Professional Practice and Nursing Excellence at Sutter Health,

Surani also works as a nurse practitioner at the Russian River Health Center and Sutter Urgent Care. She holds both an MBA and a Master's Degree in nursing; and as of November 2019, a Doctorate in Nursing Practice from Samuel Merritt University. She has served as a board

member for the Center for Well-Being since 2011, and she also sits on three other non-profit boards. Surani currently serves as the Center's Board Secretary as well as the Chair to the Board Quality Committee.

We recently sat with Surani to learn how she manages it all. "I work out every day and eat well – I love to cook," she shared, but it is really her passion to give back to her community that keeps her so engaged. As a PCP with an established panel, Surani gets to experience all aspects of life with her patients – "it is a true honor" – and part of her role is connecting her patients to resources like the Center's nutrition services. Surani is deeply impressed by the work we do – both from a clinical perspective of improved health outcomes, but also because of the lasting impact we have on the overall wellbeing of patients and their families.



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## CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES



**Carlos Chan**

As so many of us do, Carlos Chan neglected his health for the sake of others. A painter, he would start his day at 6 am and work late into the evening to support his family. He felt like he didn't have time to eat well or exercise, sharing "I would get home from work stressed and tired, with no energy and feeling irritated." It wasn't until Carlos fractured his toe and underwent routine blood work that he discovered he also had diabetes.

The news was a shock. "In my family there is this myth that diabetes equals death." He was understandably afraid, but Carlos' primary care provider Dr. DeVon Jackson from Santa Rosa Community Health referred him to the Center so he could get the comprehensive support he needed. Carlos enrolled in "La Diabetes y Su Salud," an American Diabetes Association recognized

program proven effective for diabetes self-management. The Spanish-language class teaches patients to make healthy lifestyle changes through diet, exercise, and stress management—and it offers an individualized approach so that each patient can create actionable steps toward improving their health. Carlos learned how to improve his eating habits, and exercise became an integral part of his life. In just one month he lost 20 pounds, and his hemoglobin A1c levels have since dropped from 8.6 to 7.1.

The lifestyle changes Carlos learned at the Center did more than improve his health outcomes—it helped him recover his sense of well-being and reconnect with his family. "Now every day after dinner my family and I make sure to include at least 45 minutes of physical activity. We go out walking or on our bikes, and we spend time as a family." The diagnosis of diabetes was scary, but it was also a catalyst for change. "Now I feel better—more relaxed and energized. I am very thankful to the Center, especially to my Dietician Trina. You can tell she loves what she does and she changed my life!"



**Salvador Vargus**

When Salvador Vargus was first diagnosed with COPD, his doctor told him his condition was so grave that he was at high risk for a heart attack or stroke. Worse yet, he needed a lung transplant. To have a fighting chance he was told that he would need to radically change his lifestyle and eating habits. That was the hardest part. "As Latinos, we're accustomed to eating tacos and carnitas, but it's all unhealthy for us."

Salvador's doctor referred him to the Center's Comer Para Vivir! (Eat to Live!) class so he could learn the fundamentals of healthy eating. The curriculum covers nutrition basics such as food groups and portion sizes, but also provides a comprehensive overview of the body's

response to food, such as the effects of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats on blood sugar, cholesterol, and body weight. The class also offers individualized meal planning so patients have the knowledge, tools, and support to make healthy meals at home. For Salvador, Comer Para Vivir helped change his life.

In addition to improving his diet, Salvador has been inspired to dramatically increase his physical activity. With an oxygen tank it is challenging, but he walks as much as he can, using his appointments as opportunities for exercise. Since enrolling in the class Salvador has lost 26 pounds, and his doctor tells him if he continues with his lifestyle changes he will no longer need a lung transplant. Salvador attributes these positive changes to the support he received from the Center's class. "I liked the motivation that I got not just from the Dietician, but the group. It's like a convivio—we're all patients, and we all get to learn from each other and share our stories."



# COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS:

## AN INNOVATIVE, EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH TO ACHIEVING COMMUNITY HEALTH



For most of us, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is something we have to actively work on to sustain. But for those wrestling with the social determinants of health that create health inequities—such as poverty, trauma, or limited access to resources—a healthy lifestyle

can seem out of reach. Faced with these burdens, many vulnerable and underserved individuals try to make do without the care they need. Shifting health outcomes will require a new approach, one that creates a bridge into these communities – linking people to the health resources and support services they need to live well.

Even for people in underserved communities who do gain access to health services, studies show that critical gaps remain between providers and the patients they serve—be it in health literacy, language, or culture—and these gaps impede the achievement of optimal health. Increasingly, health care organizations have begun looking to Community Health Workers (CHWs) to bridge

these gaps – both to reach those who are not accessing needed care, and to help those who need more comprehensive support within the care team.

The California Future Health Workforce Commission 2018 report named “scale(ing) the engagement of community health workers, *promotores*, and peer providers through certification, training, and reimbursement” as one of their main recommendations for improving primary care by 2030. This is because research demonstrates that integrating CHWs into a primary care team is an upstream, evidence-based prevention initiative proven to improve patient health outcomes and experience, while also reducing costs. This is especially true for populations who struggle with lower levels of health literacy, and who live in neighborhoods where people are at highest risk for developing hypertension and other chronic conditions.

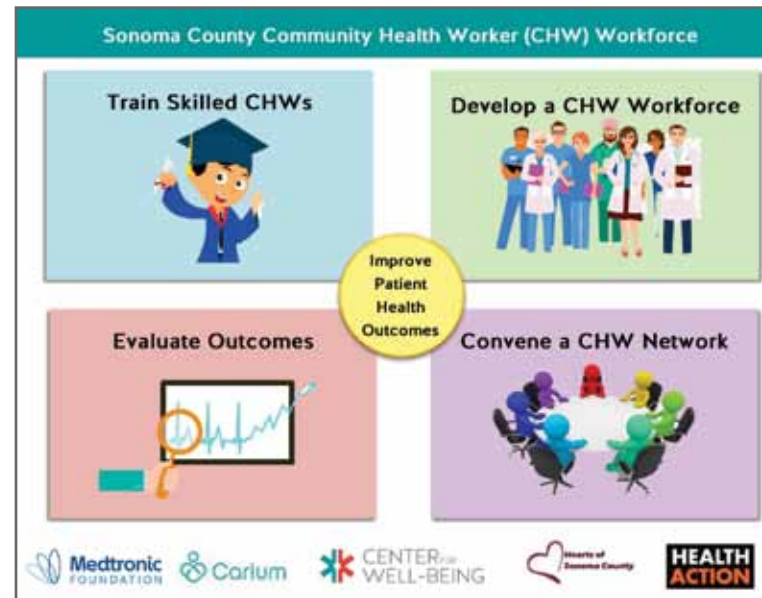
The Center has been a leader in CHW training for over a decade, engaging residents as community leaders, and building their knowledge and skills to provide peer-to-peer education, place-based interventions, and targeted outreach to vulnerable and underserved areas. The Center’s training program – informed by nationally recognized core competencies and clinical content experts – couples behavioral modification coaching with evidence-based health education via three pillars: (1) CHW Core Competencies, (2) Nutrition, Lifestyle, and Chronic Disease Management, and (3) Community Health and Team-Based Care.

### CHW Workforce Pipeline & Care Team Integration: A Key Strategy

Because the Center offers a strength-based learning environment that highlights individual skills and assets, we have been successful in both attracting and maintaining participants. In addition to training CHWs to serve as crucial resources for their communities, many of our gradu-

ates have used their training as CHWs as a springboard to find jobs within the health care field and at local NGOs.

The Center has been a key partner with Health Action’s Hearts of Sonoma, who identified the development of a CHW workforce a key strategy within the portfolio of intervention aimed at reducing cardiovascular disease in our community. Because of our proven record of success in training and engaging CHWs, the Center is



taking a leadership role in developing a Community Health Worker Career Pathway with our exciting new CHW Workforce development pilot.

The CHW workforce pilot will advance the following four overarching project areas:

### Infrastructure Development:

A CHW employer advisory group and a CHW network will be established to strengthen the communication between Health Care providers and the patients they serve. The employer group will advise us

on the skills needed for the CHW workforce, highlighting the necessary training for the role and informing the career training pathway. At the same time, the CHW network will provide a voice for CHWs actively working throughout the county and those interested in becoming CHWs, serving as a platform to deliver peer-to-peer support, refresher trainings to hone professional skills, and provide a forum for presentations and trainings related to priority health issues.

**CHW Career Training:** The Center will employ established best training practices to provide a CHW training program informed by and expanded to meet the specific needs of local employers and healthcare providers.

**CHW Clinic Integration:** A technology platform that interfaces with electronic medical records will be developed for the pilot program, in order to better allow CHWs to provide patient navigation, health education, and communication between patients and healthcare teams.

### Evaluation

**Design:** CHWs impact on improving patient engagement, self-efficacy and health metrics over time will be closely evaluated, with our results shared broadly.

We’re excited that additional partners have joined our project to provide financial and programmatic support. The Medtronic Foundation, whose strategic direction and mission closely aligns with the pilot, has awarded the Center funding to accelerate progress towards developing the CHW vision for Sonoma County. Carium has also joined the Center’s pilot as a partner and funder, supporting a CHW pilot to provide health coaching to hypertensive patients by using their population health management software platform. The vision of the CHW Workforce Pipeline and Care Team Integration Project is to complement the Patient Centered Medical Home care team to provide culturally appropriate patient health education and address social determinants of health. CHWs can better serve vulnerable individuals most at risk for chronic disease by linking patients to ancillary community-based services such as food assistance programs, health education classes, and physical activity resources. Ultimately, integrating CHWs into the care team will create a healthier Sonoma County with greater health equity for all!



The Center for Well-Being’s community impact was featured in the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Preventing Chronic Disease Journal in July—“A Community-Wide Collaboration to Reduce Cardiovascular Disease Risk: The Hearts of Sonoma County Initiative.” The Center’s blood pressure screenings and community clinical linkage was featured as a key contributing factor to the success of the initiative, a successful multi-sector collaborative effort to reduce cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk in Sonoma County.

# Because healthy can take you anywhere.

## MEET STEPHANIE STRICKLEN, MOTHER OF THREE-YEAR-OLD OLIVIA

*Patient of Dr. Iezza, pediatrician at St. Joseph Health Medical Group*

What's it like to be the mother of a fearless three-year-old? Ask Stephanie Stricklen, and she will admit that it can be a wild ride. Like the time her daughter, Olivia, fell off her bicycle one evening, badly hitting the back of her head. Stephanie called Olivia's pediatrician, Dr. Iezza, who was able to help assess the situation over the phone. With no sign of serious injury, Dr. Iezza instructed Stephanie on what to do, helping her avoid a trip to the emergency room. The responsiveness and care Stephanie received, including a follow-up call the next day, is the reason she trusts the doctors of St. Joseph Health Medical Group. Today, Olivia is back on her bicycle and ready to take on any bumps in the road.



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## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:

### A conversation with St. Joseph Health Medical Group's Dr. David Della Lana



There are a myriad of factors that can challenge our ability to take care of ourselves, and we often sacrifice our own basic needs in order to prioritize the needs of family and the demands of work – to the point that even something as simple as navigating today's food choices in order to maintain a

healthy diet can seem overwhelming. Sometimes we all just need a little help. With that in mind, we are excited to share the news that we will be partnering with St. Joseph Health Medical Group as the health education arm for their HMO patients who will now be able to receive our services at no additional cost.

We recently spoke about our new partnership with Dr. David Della Lana, a PCP and Co-Medical Director of the SJHMG HMO Network. Dr. Della Lana expressed that one of the primary health concerns for our Sonoma County population is weight management, due to the downstream metabolic consequences that follow from a high BMI. Obesity is a major contributing risk factor for chronic disease, and he pointed out that one in three Sonoma County children are already at an unhealthy weight, and over 60% of adults are overweight or obese. We also have a significant pre-diabetic population that demonstrates very little active engagement with the lifestyle habits and behaviors associated with positive health outcomes.

Dr. Della Lana is convinced that St. Joseph's patients can greatly benefit from the Center's nutritional education, and he is excited for us to begin providing them with the tools and support to prepare low-cost healthy meals from home. As Dr. Della Lana stated, "a persistent life of eating out is not compatible with health."

Continued on page 18

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# CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES



**Cynthia Johnson**

Something needed to change. Cynthia Johnson was in the beginning stages of renal failure, suffering from bladder problems, taking three high blood pressure medications, and she could barely walk due to immense pain in both of her knees. Her doctor urged

her to make a radical lifestyle change and referred her to the Center's Weight Control class. Initially reluctant and embarrassed, Cynthia was hesitant to enroll, but she recognized that she needed support to face these changes and joined the program.

The class surprised her. A lifelong learner, Cynthia quickly became engaged with the dynamic, participatory learning environment and was excited to increase her knowledge and implement strategies to improve her

health. She didn't think she would ever be able to walk a mile again, but after just two months in the Center's Weight Control class Cynthia was walking an hour a day and lost 30 pounds.

Cynthia's newfound confidence in making healthy lifestyle changes not only had a positive impact on her own life, but her family's as well. Her children and grandchildren are now walking every night and making healthier food choices. After graduating from the class Cynthia now walks up to three miles a day and she's down to one medication to manage her blood pressure.

Cynthia tells us it was the spirit of acceptance, community, and encouragement demonstrated by the Center's instructor and shared by her classmates that provided her with the motivation to make these lasting lifestyle changes. She successfully achieved her wellness goals, and her life changed because of it. "I finally feel good about myself again."

Before Denise Redeker received a heart transplant in January of 2018, her heart was functioning at 5% of its capacity and she had to struggle just to climb a flight of stairs. After the transplant, Denise experienced internal bleeding and had to be reopened twice. After three arduous months in the hospital, she was finally allowed to return home; but even then, she was so immune suppressed that it was almost impossible for her to rebuild any strength on her own. Denise still could barely climb a flight of stairs, and she rarely left home.

A friend saw how much Denise was struggling and recommended that she try the Center's Cardiac Rehab program HeartWorks. Denise recalls that when she first started the class she was "completely out of shape with no muscle tone whatsoever." But the HeartWorks team welcomed Denise with open arms and made her feel like there was nothing she couldn't do. With their help and

guidance she regained her muscle tone and learned how to exercise with her new heart.

Once unable to walk up a flight of stairs, in March 2019 Denise ran a 5k race, breaking down in tears when she completed it and thinking about how far she had come. Denise shared that she has a newfound appreciation for her life, and she lives every day "as if my heart donor was watching." In April 2019 she completed a 10k race with the same HeartWorks staff who helped her recover. When asked what her biggest takeaway was from the class, Denise paused for just a moment and responded, "Anything is possible."

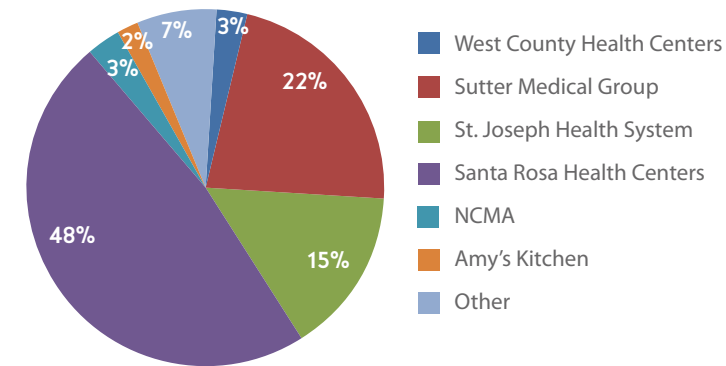


**Denise Redeker**

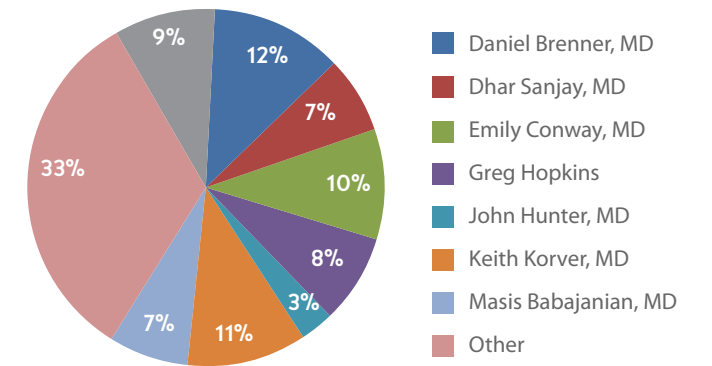
# TAKE CARE

## QUALITY REPORT

### Referrals Brookwood



### Referrals HeartWorks



### Weight Management

- Average weight loss: **16** pounds
- Percent weight loss: **7%**
- Average loss in inches in weight circumference: **3.21** inches
- Average range of weight loss: **5 to 29** pounds

*First-time class participants*

### Cardiac Rehabilitation

PHASE II

- **95%** of non-CHF patients doubled their MET Level or increased to  $\geq 3$
- **21%** of CHF increased exercise and **100%** improved exercise time

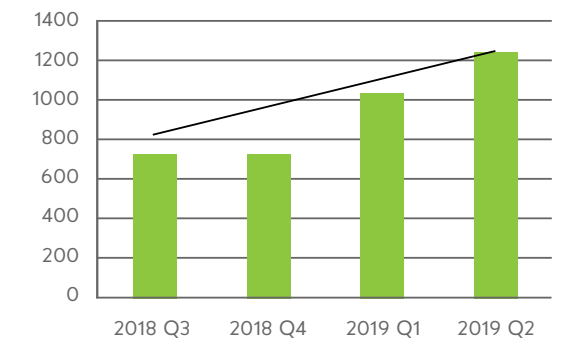
PHASE III

- **80%** ongoing patients MET Level  $\geq 3$
- **87%** maintained or improved previous time or achieved **30-50** min of exercise

### Diabetes

- Spanish class participants median decrease of HbA1c by **1.8** points; **80%** achieve an HbA1c less than or equal to **7.0** and/or a drop in HbA1c of at least **1** point
- English class participants median decrease of HbA1c by **1.4** points; **75%** achieve an HbA1c less than or equal to **7.0** and/or a drop of at least **1** point

### Growth & Demand





# 2018 CELEBRATION OF DREAMS



# 2018-19 COMMUNITY IMPACT



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Continued from page 13

Truly, this is where the Center can provide the kind of help that has been lacking in traditional HMO coverage, as we offer a unique and transformative approach to



weight management. Our 16-week weight management program is founded on evidence-based behavioral modification strategies, complemented by our emphasis on “self-compassion” in the approach to sustained change management. And our results speak for themselves, with our most recent quality outcomes for new participants demonstrating an average of 16 pound weight loss, a 3.2 inch drop in waist circumference, and a 7% loss of total body weight. And unlike the results of fad diets, our patients learn to make changes that they can easily maintain once they leave our doors. We recently had a visit from a participant who took the class over a year ago, and he returned to share the happy news that he had lost over 160 pounds (“An entire me!” his wife gushed).

We are so thrilled for this opportunity to offer our classes that are proven to improve health outcomes to St. Joseph Health HMO patients and our entire community!

## HEALTHIER TOGETHER THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT PARTNERS

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## TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY HEALTH



NUTRITION EDUCATION



CARDIAC REHABILITATION



COMMUNITY ADVOCACY



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



# ABOUT THE CENTER

The Northern California Center for Well-Being (Center) is a 501c3 non-profit agency founded in 1996 and based in Santa Rosa. The Center is Sonoma County's premier health education and wellness center, and we are committed to empowering community health through a complementary strategy of upstream prevention and health education. Our evidence-based programs and services are proven to radically improve health outcomes for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity, and we engage at a grass-roots level with the local community to promote whole-person wellness through education, mobilization, and advocacy. The Center provides services to all of Sonoma County and adjacent areas, and we serve 25,000 individuals annually with an incredible team of 25 employees and over 50 volunteers.

Our mission is to promote the well-being of the whole person by empowering people with the knowledge, skills, and spirit that will allow them to take responsibility for their personal, family, and community health. Our vision is to transform community health through thoughtful leadership, strategic partnerships, and innovative health practices capable of addressing the social determinants of health that cause health disparities in Sonoma County. Because of our unique ability to reach the most vulnerable and underserved populations, and because of the proven efficacy of our programs and services, the Center has become a trusted Sonoma County partner dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing for all in our community.



2018 Celebration of Dreams

