



**35<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD**  
HEALTH CENTER

*Welcome to  
Neighborhood!*

*Pictured: Maribel Charlotten,  
Neighborhood Health Center patient*



## Welcome to the possible. *Welcome to Neighborhood.*

In August 1987, 35 years ago, we opened our doors as a health center with the hope that people in Black Rock, Riverside and across the west side of Buffalo would have more access to primary care. Health equity is what we strived for then, and continue to work toward today.

Growth was a major theme in 2022 for Neighborhood Health Center in our health equity efforts. We added two new locations to increase access to care. Neighborhood Health Center Riverway at Niagara Street and Forest Avenue opened in June with the full complement of Neighborhood services. A bit further south on Niagara Street, Neighborhood Health Center Bridgeview opened in July to provide primary care in a partnership with BestSelf Behavioral Health at 1050 Niagara Street. Additionally, we broke ground in 2022 on an expansion at Neighborhood Health Center Mattina. The two-story addition will be completed in 2023 and will be home to a larger dental suite, expanded space for care coordination and care management teams, and more space in general for both patients and staff. This growth is a response to the continued need for access to high quality healthcare, and the fact that we had outgrown the space in our established Buffalo sites.

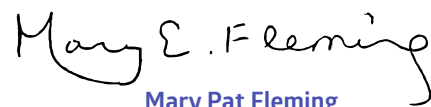
Addressing the need for better access to care enables our focus on better health outcomes. As an organization in 2022, we honed in on strategies to improve several clinical measures of care including childhood immunizations, depression screenings, and controlling high blood pressure. We achieved significant improvement in all of these measures over the course of the year.

Throughout all of our growth, we have remained a financially stable organization. The reductions in funding in 2023 due to New York State's planned carve-out of the 340B Medicaid pharmacy benefit and the end of much pandemic-related funding make sustainability a challenge. Our fiscally responsible budget for 2023 maintains staffing levels and focuses on stabilization and growth within our current locations and services.

Our greatest asset is our team. Every Neighborhood employee and board member is an ambassador of our mission. Through growth, change and an ongoing pandemic in 2022, our ambassadors continued to innovate and support each other while providing patients with kind, high quality, and compassionate care. Again this year, our patient focused board has provided the vision and guidance to ensure our success. Our ambassadors are also the reason Neighborhood was named a "Best Places to Work" finalist for a second consecutive year. Thank you, team! We are committed to making Neighborhood an even better, healthier, and inclusive place to work through initiatives that include Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice workshops, and offerings for individual growth of physical, mental and financial wellbeing.

As we reflect on the past year, we also celebrate 35 years. We've come a long way from our beginnings as the Northwest Buffalo Community Health Care Center. None of what we have accomplished, or will accomplish, happens without collaboration, teamwork and kindness. Thank you to our ambassadors, donors and supporters. You make it possible. You are Neighborhood!

  
Joanne Haefner, MS, FNP  
President & Chief Executive Officer

  
Mary Pat Fleming  
Chair, Board of Directors



We celebrated the opening of Neighborhood Health Center Riverway in 2022 with a ribbon cutting event during National Health Center Week.

## NEIGHBORHOOD PATIENT STORY

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected people of ethnic or racial minority groups with higher risks of infection, hospitalization, and death. Maribel Charlotten knows this all too well.

“I was in the hospital for 16 days, and he was there approximately 20 days. Unfortunately, he didn't survive his battle.”



Maribel Charlotten comes to Neighborhood Health Center to see her primary care physician, Dr. Ellis Gomez. Other times she comes for podiatry appointments with Dr. James Burruano, or to see the Neighborhood pharmacists and get her prescriptions. Maribel has been a Neighborhood patient for 31 years, since moving to Buffalo from Puerto Rico.

“I understand English, but there are many things I can't speak to,” says Maribel. *(Editor's note: Her quotes are translated from Spanish.)* “For me, it's a 'click' when a patient and provider speak the same language.”

Even with the good connection with her doctors, Maribel, like many Americans, was initially skeptical of the COVID-19 vaccines. She and her husband, Rufino, did not get vaccinated when they were first eligible, despite having factors that put them more at risk for severe COVID. That decision proved costly.

“I felt like I had bronchitis,” recalls Maribel, describing a day in January 2021.

“I remember seeing Maribel over a telehealth visit and she was quite sick with respiratory issues,” says Dr. Gomez. “I said to her, 'this could be COVID or it could be asthma. You need to go to the hospital!'”

Maribel went, and found out it was COVID. Then, a week later, her husband was in the hospital with COVID too.

“I was in the hospital for 16 days, and he was there approximately 20 days. Unfortunately, he didn't survive his battle,” Maribel says. The loss was devastating for her. “My family, my loved ones, and even the emotional support I received here at Neighborhood, specifically from Dr. Gomez, helped me a lot.”

“As providers, death is something that we learn to deal with, but it never gets easy,” Dr. Gomez explains. “Providers have to be able to show strength, but at the same time it's okay to show them that we feel the pain too.”

Now, two years after losing Rufino, Maribel is doing well. She loves to talk about her grandson, and she recently went back to Puerto Rico to visit family. She's also changed her mind about the COVID vaccines.

“Dr. Gomez helped me understand that I needed to get vaccinated, and I have since had all the recommended vaccine doses,” says Maribel.

Overcoming vaccine hesitancy has been a challenge for Neighborhood providers throughout the pandemic,

particularly with communities of color. Patients who identify as Hispanic or Latino, or a race other than white, are far less likely to be vaccinated against COVID. That's true at Neighborhood and nationwide. There are multiple reasons for hesitancy, but one is a lack of trust. And that's one that Neighborhood providers can work to overcome.

“As we've sat down and talked with patients, in many cases they've realized that they were holding on to a lot of misinformation about the vaccines,” says Dr. Gomez. “After talking through it, I have seen a lot of people change their minds.” That includes Maribel.

“You definitely should get them,” says Maribel. Nothing will bring Rufino back, but she hopes that sharing her story will convince others to take the virus seriously.

“We still have work to do in regards to COVID,” says Dr. Gomez. “As rules have relaxed, we need to keep emphasizing hand washing, staying physically distance, wearing masks – these things help prevent COVID. We still need to talk about it, and we still need to encourage patients to take control of their health, and take care of their health.”





## HEALTH EQUITY

### Meeting patients *where they are.*

Offering a number of primary and integrated care services conveniently under one roof is one way Neighborhood Health Center is working to make the healthcare experience better for patients. Another way is by being out in the community and bringing services to patients, including caring for students at Buffalo Public Schools through our mobile unit.



#### Project Homeless Connect

A lack of housing, or unsafe housing, can negatively affect a person's health. Neighborhood ambassadors participated in Project Homeless Connect at the Buffalo Convention Center.

#### Make Your Voice Heard

Neighborhood partnered with the Stop the Violence Coalition during National Health Center Week to register community members to vote.

#### Ambassadors in the Community

Neighborhood ambassadors participated in the Puerto Rican and Hispanic Day parade, as well as the Juneteenth and Pride parades.

In 2022...



3,618

COVID-19 tests administered by Neighborhood Health Center.



8,288

COVID-19 vaccine doses given by Neighborhood Health Center.



13,413

Telehealth visits for Neighborhood Health Center patients, plus we served patients through 5,176 telephonic visits.

## BETTER CARE

In 2022...



112,741

Patient visits



28,662

Unique patients

### INTEGRATED CARE



14,785

Dental visits



4,545

Behavioral Health visits



3,948

Wellness visits



4,810

Podiatry visits

### PREGNANCY CARE



428

Babies delivered

### PHARMACY



8%

Increase over prior year in prescriptions filled at Blasdell



14%

Increase over prior year in prescriptions filled at Mattina



+

Opened new pharmacy at Riverway

### WHO WE SERVE



87%

of patients lived at or below the 200% Federal Poverty Level



3,045

Unique patients experiencing homelessness.



The HealthySteps program launched at Neighborhood Health Center Blasdell in 2022. HealthySteps promotes the health, wellbeing and school readiness of babies and toddlers, with an emphasis on families in low-income communities.

### What our patients are saying...

“Coming here has genuinely renewed my faith that some doctors actually go into practice to help people. This was the best experience I’ve ever had in a doctor’s office and I’m really happy to be a patient here.”

“I’m 45 years old, and I’ve been going to the dentist my whole life. This place here has definitely been my best experience. Easily the most efficient dentist I’ve ever been to. Thank you.”

### 2022 PATIENT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

- 1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- 9% More than one race
- 21% Black/African American
- 7% Asian
- 2% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 10% Unreported

#### Race

50% White

35% Hispanic/Latino

#### Ethnicity

65% Non-Hispanic/Latino

## BETTER HEALTH



Neighborhood was awarded a Health Resources and Services Administration silver badge in 2022. The badge means Neighborhood ranks in the top 20% of health centers in the U.S. for quality, and Neighborhood is the highest ranked health center in Western New York.

## BETTER COST and THRIVING WORKFORCE



**\$41,301,070**  
Total spend in 2022



**\$81,707,574**  
Regional economic impact in 2022



**459**  
Full or part-time staff employed in 2022



nhcwny.org

**Blasdell**  
4233 Lake Avenue  
Blasdell, NY 14219

**Bridgeview**  
1050 Niagara Street  
Buffalo, NY 14213

**Mattina**  
300 Niagara Street  
Buffalo, NY 14201

**Northwest**  
155 Lawn Avenue  
Buffalo, NY 14207

**Riverway**  
1569 Niagara Street  
Buffalo, NY 14213

**Southtowns**  
151 Elmview Avenue  
Hamburg, NY 14075

## In 2022...



**97%**  
of patients received body mass index screenings and follow-up plans



**95%**  
of adult patients who use tobacco received cessation advice or interventions



**91%**  
of pediatric patients received weight assessments and counseling



**90%**  
of patients ages 12+ were screened for depression and received follow-up plans



**86%**  
of eligible patients were screened for cervical cancer



**59%**  
of eligible patients were screened for breast cancer



**55%**  
of eligible patients were screened for colorectal cancer



National Health Center Week festivities included Staff Appreciation Day and Patient Appreciation events at all Neighborhood sites.

Construction began in 2022 on a 15,000 square foot addition at the Mattina location. When it's completed in 2023, the addition will house an expanded dental suite, and provide more room overall for patients and employees.



### EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Joanne Haefner, MS, FNP  
President and Chief Executive Officer
- Christopher Biondolillo, MD-BC  
Senior Medical Director
- James Burruano, DPM, ABFAS, ACFAS  
Chief Medical Administrator
- Stacy Dean, ANP-BC, MBA  
Vice President of Clinical Operations
- Edward Golebiewski  
Vice President of Finance
- Marc Howe  
Vice President of Operations
- Michele Steiner, PharmD  
Vice President of Pharmacy
- Kelly Suzan, MS, RN  
Vice President of Strategy

### SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Ben Catanzaro, CFE  
Director of Finance
- Gail Ferguson, MD-BC, FAAP  
Medical Director
- Michele Frech, DO  
Medical Director, OBGYN
- Ginger Geoffery, APR  
Director of Communications
- Merlyn Hammer, MS  
Senior Director of Public Health
- Chad Kahler, DDS  
Dental Director
- Julie Kozlowski, RN, MHA  
Director of Nursing
- Melissa Mosko, PhD  
Director of Training and Development
- Melissa Payne, SPHR  
Senior Director of Human Resources
- Elise Robinson, MA  
Director of Community Health
- Franklin Smith  
Senior Director of Quality
- Megan Stanbro, MBA  
Director of Operations

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

\* Patient Board Members

- Mary Pat Fleming\*  
Chair
- Michael Laskowski  
Vice Chair
- Cory Mosgeller\*  
Treasurer
- Colleen Lewis\*  
Secretary
- Kathy Banks\*  
Eric Brady
- Shannon Bryant
- Kushnood Haq\*
- Ryan Liddell
- Dawn Maher\*
- Dan McCormick\*
- Karen Pepper\*
- Timothy Pitirri\*
- Diana Proske\*
- Jessica Starks\*
- Sarah Utkin
- Wilber "Chip" Woods\*
- Andrew Yates\*



# Our Mission

Impactful healthcare provided by kind people so Western New Yorkers can achieve their dreams and goals.



## What our patients are saying...

“I felt comfortable and at ease. The center was clean and welcoming. The intake receptionist was so sweet and caring. The medical assistants were very nice, and the nurse practitioner was awesome. She listened well and was very thorough.”