

BRIDGES TO MOMS NEWS FALL 2023

From Roseanna Means, MD, Director, Bridges to Moms

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING BRIDGES TO MOMS! YOUR HELP IS TRULY MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

Bridges to Moms succeeds in changing the health trajectory of women facing pregnancy and homelessness, helping them to focus on self-care, better health, skills development, empowerment and future self-sufficiency.

Director's Corner: I am blessed to lead a team of extraordinary individuals who bring practical knowledge, hope, love, compassion, dignity, respect and humor to the families in their care every single day. Our work is hard. The women carry stories of pain, hunger, abandonment, loneliness, destitution, and trauma. What they all have in common is that they are carrying a baby whose future will be shaped by what happens to her during her pregnancy. Will she have enough to eat? How will she get to her appointments? Will she be safe? Who will take over her care after she delivers? What happens if she feels too depressed and alone? Most of all, where will she live? We show her what to do, help her find a home, provide her with food and essential tangibles, and stay with her through her health care journey, long past the day she leaves the hospital. If you are looking for a little light in the darkness amongst all the grim news we read every day, this is where you will find it.



The Bridges to Moms Team was honored with being recognized as an example of the values promoted by Brigham and Women's Hospital. L to R: Carmen Pena, Eudal Infante, Dr. Means, William Diaz, Fernanda Ortega

Third Annual Career Day. Check out this link to Fox 25 News:

<https://shorturl.at/xX249>

October 4, 2023: over 70 moms and babies arrived at the BWH's Hale Atrium for a day dedicated to helping the moms move forward in their lives. We offered skills stations in resume revisions, finance and budget advice, and interviewing skills. Representatives from 3 Workforce Development Training Programs provided the women with opportunities to acquire training and job placement in three fields: Community Health Worker (William James College), medical translation (Found in Translation) and construction (Associated Builders and Contractors of MA). An immigration lawyer was on hand to help newly arrived immigrants understand the steps they need to take to get their working papers. A team of BWH Pediatricians, Neonatologists and Family Medicine providers offered answers to commonly-asked questions. We had 50 volunteers on hand, lots of food, clothing and baby item give-aways, and the opportunity for the moms to see first-hand that they are not alone. The whole day, including on-site baby-sitting and transportation to/from the event, was entirely free for these moms. Deeply grateful to the many individuals and organizations whose staff provided all these resources: Associated Builders & Contractors of MA, BWH Division of Women's Health, BWH Family Care Associates, BWH Pediatrics, BWH Workforce Development, Citizens Bank,



Found in Translation, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp, BU School of Public Health, Rian Immigrant Center, TD Bank, and William James College.



NE Patriot Lawrence Guy and his wonderful wife, Andrea Guy, shower our moms with love.

For the second year in a row, Lawrence and Andrea Guy opened their hearts to 26 of our moms at their annual Group Baby Shower at Gillette Stadium on October 17. Their extraordinary compassion and love were on full display throughout this magical day where the moms were pampered, fed, entertained, and sent home with a bundle of baby items to help them prepare for their newborns. Anyone who has raised a child knows that babies need “stuff,” but these moms lack the resources to be able to afford the most basic items, even though the majority of them hold jobs during their pregnancies. For the Guys to recognize the importance of having these items on hand when the baby is born is such a powerful gift, and goes a long way towards reducing stress and anxiety that pervade these women’s lives.



Tangible support—it matters.

The women who are referred to our program are experiencing poverty, hunger, housing insecurity, trauma, mental and physical health challenges. At my clinic, I ask each patient what she has eaten that day and invariably the answer is pretty much “nothing”. The clinic visit includes a Welcome Packet that contains tangibles for basic needs: tickets to the BWH cafeteria, a Stop & Shop and a Target Gift Card. We also hand out links to free ESL and GED classes. Probably the most important service we provide, which

sets us apart from the rest of the world, is transportation. Even though the state has been forced to place the women at shelters as far away as Holyoke and Springfield, Bridges to Moms commits to ensuring that the moms can actually get to the world-class care that they need and that the BWH provides, because they are all high-risk pregnancies, and two lives are at stake. We spend an average of \$1000 per person each year providing all these tangibles because we believe that they are part of what constitutes health care, and even more in transportation costs from those far-away locations. But we can’t bill for them, so we rely on supporters like you to help us out. And \$1000 is the least we do. During the 18+ months that we follow each family, it is not unusual for a mom to reach out to us when the food stamps have run out, or she can’t afford diapers, or the baby has grown and needs a crib. At any one time, we have as many as 250 women who rely on us, so thank you for whatever you can do to help us continue to help them.

Recognition.

This Fall, I received the Equity Social Justice and Advocacy Award from Harvard Medical School in recognition of my over 40 years helping those who have struggled to gain access to quality medical care. This was a proud moment for me, because I had made the conscious decision many years ago that equity, social justice and advocacy were the values that I wanted to guide me through my career. I am deeply grateful to my Division Chief, Dr. Kathy Rexrode, for nominating me for this award.



Dr. Joan Reede (HMS), Dr. Means, Dr. Rexrode (Photo: Jeff Thibault)

Importance of communication.

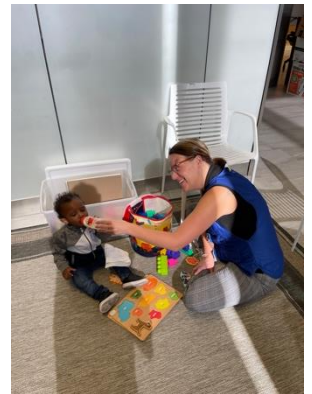
It seems it is harder and harder to reach a “live” person in the health care system these days. It’s even harder for those whose lives are in chaos. The Bridges to Moms moms need immediate answers for the hundreds of questions that come up about housing, food, transportation, safety, medical appointments and navigating the many bureaucracies that are required to get help. Our team carries phones so they can be reached easily. In 2023 to date, that has meant over 3,000 calls and nearly 50,000 minutes spent providing a level of personalized care that makes what we do so impactful.

Success.

I spoke to a woman this week whom I had met when she was 18 and homeless. Her “boyfriend” was trafficking her among his friends. After working with us through two pregnancies, she has moved on. She has two healthy children, a cozy home, and her kids go to daycare so she can get to her job. The boyfriend is history. Another mom sent me a photo of her daughter in her first Halloween costume. This little girl required Neonatal ICU care when she was born nearly 18 months ago and had to fight for her life. And that was after her mom fought to get away from an abuser. We met both these women when they were at their lowest points and the future seemed bleak. But we saw in them the courage and determination to move beyond those difficult days in order to create a better life for their children. God bless them.

Please continue to support the vital and life-changing work of Bridges to Moms through your gift to the “Bridges to Moms Fund at BWH”. You can give online through this link: bwhgiving.org/bridges OR send a check made out to: **BRIDGES TO MOMS FUND—BWH**, C/O Dr. Roseanna Means, BWH Division of Women’s Health, 75 Francis St, OBC-3, Boston, MA 02115. OR contact my office directly about making a gift through a donor-advised fund: 617-525-6766.

CAREER DAY 2023:



Resume Station



Interviewing Skills



Pediatrician Corner



Budget/Finance Advice



William James College



Found in Translation



Associated Builders/Contractors of MA