

## Telling the **Stories** of Community Benefit



### Translating the Medical Needs of Patients Into Their Everyday World

When Lillian Negroñ, CNA, began her work as a medical interpreter in the Burgdorf/Bank of America Health Center, located on the Mount Sinai Campus of Saint Francis, she immediately assessed the greatest need was an atmosphere of trust. Helping patients and families communicate in their first language was only the beginning. “When I first came (to Saint Francis), I had to work on helping the (clinic) culture. I am used to hugs in my agency and I felt I needed to help people get closer and feel more comfortable, even just smile more often.”

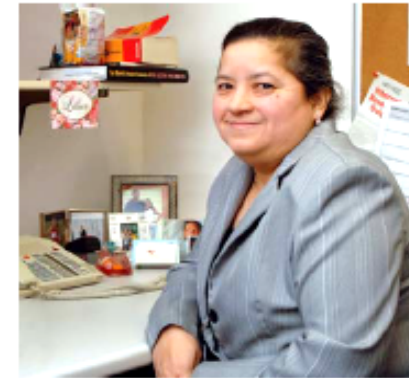
Donna Benzinger, RN, administrator in the clinics, says Lillian has helped the staff as well. Far beyond providing interpretation services and sensitivity to cultural appropriateness, Saint Francis offers a more welcoming climate that nurtures a healing attitude for patients.

“The lead partner in this (Community Benefit) initiative is Latino Community Services, Inc., a non-profit organization based in the City of Hartford with over twenty years of experience providing services to people living with HIV/AIDS and people at risk of HIV infection. Latino Community Services (LCS) is the only Latino organization in the City of Hartford dedicated exclusively to providing comprehensive and coordinated prevention, education, and care services. LCS deeply values its relationships with community partners, including Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. LCS has been fortunate to collaborate with Saint Francis on two innovative projects: the Latino Faith Partnership for Prevention & Treatment and “Contigo y Por Ti” (With You and For You).”

Lillian is uniquely skilled at knowing what can help a person “feel at home.” She began her healthcare career in Home Care Services, assisting patients right in their homes.

### “Contigo y Por Ti”

“Contigo y Por Ti” is a bilingual/bicultural demonstration pilot program implemented by Latino Community Services (LCS) in partnership with Saint Francis Hospital. This program focuses on providing culturally and linguistically competent medical care service to HIV-positive, limited English proficient (LEP) patients in Greater Hartford through training of medical interpreters and service providers on how to use medical interpreters, as well as on cultural competency. LCS’s trained medical interpreters are embedded at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. The goal of this program is to eliminate linguistic and cultural barriers so that hospitals can be an effective access point in the continuum of care.



Lillian Negroñ knows the central role of helping a person ‘feel at home’ to better serve the healing needs of patients and families struggling with serious medical challenges.



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Lillian Negroñ, CNA

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# Stories

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Many patients say they feel more comfortable talking to their doctor about sensitive topics when they have a trained interpreter assisting. "Sometimes people come to the clinic and hear the questions from the doctors but they do not describe the pain they are really feeling," Lillian notes, "I hear them and they talk in a shallow way, without much depth until there is an interpreter that helps them talk naturally...like they do at home."

Why is this benefit to patients so important? Lillian says, "Some people look at those who have HIV or AIDS from far away, but not me – I hug them. And now people often come directly to my office before they even sign in!"

When we talk about the ways to expand "access to care," we get to include the work of Lillian, whose caring approach inspires honest responses from patients and families and encourages patients to keep their appointments. Barriers to healthcare can include transportation issues, being uninsured, lack of a primary care provider and even a patient's fear. Lillian recalls, "I knew a patient who had kept the concern about a medication to himself for years. One day he felt comfortable with me to talk about it. It involved very personal aspects of his life. Once he was able to talk with the nurse he received the medication and he was so happy – and always tells me how much he appreciates me."

*“ I help out as I can for people who need interpreting. Wherever they need me, I'm there. ”*

Lillian Negroń, CNA

On any given day Lillian may be asked to see four or five patients, but she says, "I will see everyone along the way. I help out as I can for people who need interpreting. Wherever they need me, I'm there." Her friendliness seems to make the difference. "I just like people, I guess," she says.

Not just anyone can be an interpreter. "You need to know a lot about anatomy, parts of the body, and ways to describe symptoms," she says, "but most of all you need to listen to people well. When I first came here (Burgdorf/Bank of America Clinic) they all thought I knew everyone who came in the door. I said 'No, I just like to say 'hi' to everyone and talk to them.'" Maybe this is why the program, in Spanish, says it best, "Contigo y Por Ti" ("With You and For You").

What a marvelous benefit to our community!

