

V-WOW CHRONICLES

Volunteering for a Healthy Community

December 2012



**West County
Health Centers**

Caring for our Communities

Kindness is Golden

You can be right or you can be pleasant, as Grandma used to say.

Mario Guerra and **Robin Lorentz** embody the latter approach to communicating with patients at the West County Health Centers.

As Office Manager of the Occidental Health Center until August and now as Front Office Coordinator at the Sebastopol Community Health Center, Mario has a mandate: "The community depends on us to be accessible and compassionate. Even when the medical center gets busy and intense, our care teams always try to treat pa-

tients with respect and kindness."

Robin agrees. "People want someone to listen, make eye contact. A welcoming smile goes a long way," she said.

Mario is the right-hand man of a plethora of physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants and an untold number of patients. Often, he's the first contact for patients after they arrive for their appointments.

"I try to be the point person for the clinic," he said.

Mario's daily tasks range from helping other care team mem-

bers map out treatment plans, to streamlining day-to-day operations, to performing simple acts of kindness, such as hold-



Sebastopol Health Center's Mario Guerra understands the importance of treating all patients with kindness and compassion.

Volunteer Roster

Helen Baum

Iris Bezan

Kelly Bowers

Robin Bowman

Jennifer Byrom

Jo Cipra

Doug Cronin

Elizabeth Crown

Kara Cunningham

Dave Henry

Judy Hess

Patrick Hogan

Ginger Kelly

Hazel Kagan

Shawni Lauenroth

Randy Lerner

Sharon LeRoy

Sudie Llana

Robin Lorentz

Kaye Love

Brian Massey-Todd

McKenna Moy

Jennifer Nichols

Julia Pollock

Terri-gene Schmidt

Virginia Valente-Russo

Norma Vargas

Fabiola Vasquez

Liza Vekony

Sharon Whitten

Robin’s presence says: “I’m a patient; I’m your peer; I’m a resource.”

ing a patient’s hand until another member of the care team arrives.

“Following up with patients is essential to any wellness plan,” Mario said. “So is learning to ask the right questions and listening to the patient’s needs. That requires openness and a

ness Center for treatment of chronic pain.

Through the course of her treatment at the Wellness Center, Robin learned to “not conquer but make peace with pain. It changed my life.”

She “fell in love” with the cen-

Stanford University School of Medicine.

The workshops will cover techniques to help patients deal with the frustration, fatigue, pain and isolation that accompany chronic pain and disease.



Volunteer Robin Lorentz supports patients with information and resources while serving as a Waiting Room Host at the Occidental Area Health Center.

nonjudgmental attitude.”

Robin’s background is a bit more eclectic. When she wasn’t busy raising her two young sons (now 27 and 29), she surfed off the beaches of Jenner and worked in the hospitality business.

She began volunteering this year at the Occidental Health Center while recovering from a severe hand injury seven years ago. After lots of traditional medical and physical therapy, Robin was referred to the Forestville Well-

ness Center for treatment of chronic pain. Through the course of her treatment at the Wellness Center, Robin learned to “not conquer but make peace with pain. It changed my life.” She “fell in love” with the cen-

ter’s holistic approach and educational programs, and learned innovative ways of dealing with her condition. Robin’s condition and recovery transformed her life in ways she never could have anticipated. In addition to serving as a volunteer waiting room host, in January Robin will begin teaching workshops on the management of chronic pain at the Forestville Wellness Center. Robin recently completed an intensive, four-day training workshop on managing chronic disease at the

A born nurturer with open, lightening-blue eyes, Robin draws patients to the volunteer Resource Table with a huge smile and an offer of “freshly filtered water”. In the years she’s been a WCHC patient and a volunteer, she’s learned that she’s a good listener, that she doesn’t have to be a fixer, that many people just long for a kind ear.

Her presence says: “I’m a patient; I’m your peer; I’m a resource.”

**Congratulations and Thank You to
President’s Volunteer Service Award recipients**

***Helen Baum
Judy Hess
Robin Lorentz***

***Julia Pollock
Mario Solano
Virginia Valente-Russo***

A huge thank you to these remarkable volunteers who have given 100 or more hours of service to West County Health Centers and our communities.