

# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS FIGHTING CHRONIC DISEASE IN THE NORTH BAY

The Center for Well-Being celebrates twenty years serving Sonoma County residents through chronic disease prevention and management. The Center’s fiscal sustainability and strong leadership has enabled continual growth to become a leader in Sonoma County’s efforts to defeat chronic disease. A few of the Center’s leaders throughout our twenty year history tell the story, from our founding to our current role in Sonoma County’s health landscape.

## Founding Days

To address the need for diabetes and heart disease support services for their patients, Dr. Walt Mills; a family medicine physician; and Dr. James Price; a cardiologist; envisioned an independent, non-profit health education center dedicated to the wellness of the community and able to collaborate with all healthcare providers in Sonoma County without affiliation. The Center for Well-Being was established in the fall of 1996 led by then Executive Director

Nancy Masters, initially providing cardiac rehabilitation and congestive heart failure group behavioral education classes. Today the Center offers a variety of diabetes and heart disease self-management and prevention services, each rooted in the patient empowerment model of building self-efficacy to improve health outcomes.



**Greg Spaulding, Board Member 1997-2007**

Greg Spaulding joined the Board during its infancy phase. Recognizing the unique role the Center filled for comprehensive patient health education; Greg was instrumental in defining the organization as a collaborator to the medical community, rather than a competitor, an organizational core value that has remained for twenty years. He knew the Center should focus on health education, rather than offer medical care.

His influence contributed to the expansion of the Board beyond representatives from the medical community to

*“The best investment is providing health education (to people) that would not otherwise get it, reducing overall healthcare cost to the community. The return of investment is tangible because people’s health is improved as a result. Better health leads to reduced healthcare costs,” said Pat Kilkenny.*

**1996** Center for Well-Being Founded by James Price, MD & Walt Mills, MD.

**1998** Comprehensive menu of self-care classes available.

**1997** Offered Cardiac Rehab and Congestive Heart Failure Services at HeartWorks.  
Diabetes education program launched.

**2003** Health plan of the Redwoods Bankrupt. Sutter Medical Group of the Redwoods contract for Health Education.  
Diabetes Program received **American Diabetes Association** Recognition.

**2005** California State Tobacco Control Grant secured.

**2004** Center moved to Tesconi Circle.

**2006** Center faces financial instability with a meager \$600,000 operating budget. Smoke Free Babies Program launched.  
Center’s Promotores de Salud funded to address childhood obesity.

**2007** Alena Wall, Executive Director joins Center with a vision to develop the agency to include community-based prevention.  
Medtronic funds La Diabetes y Su Salud.

**2009** Community-based asthma prevention initiative launched.

**2008** Project TRUE, Teen Peer Education program launched.

**2010** Healthy Aging Programs for Seniors expanded.



include a wider spectrum of Sonoma County leaders, such as key business and elected officials including past City Council member Mike Runyon and the Chief Operating Officer of State Farm Shirley Gordon.

**Sustainable Business Model**



**Pat Kilkenny, Board Member 2004-2013**

Pat Kilkenny joined the Board near the time Health Plan of the Redwoods (HPR) went bankrupt. As one of the primary revenue sources of the Center, the closing of HPR was poised to be a major blow. In 2007 the Center hired Executive Director, Alena Wall, who through the support of Pat and other key finance committee members,

developed a sustainable business model for the Center that has grown exponentially year over year. Part of that vision included expanding the organization from a cap single source funding to be a multi-source funded agency with a major role in community-based prevention. This diverse funding stream grew from a capitation contract with Sutter Medical Group of the Redwoods as their health education provider and obtaining American Diabetes Association recognition of the Center’s Diabetes Wellness series enabling Medicare billing, to securing a Partnership Health Plan contract to serve MediCal patients and a number of multi-year, chronic disease prevention grants including being a state tobacco control competitive grantee for 10 years. When reflecting on the growth of the Center, Pat is proud that “the Center has financial sustainability on its

**“I don’t know a better investment: One that invests in the now to manage chronic illness and an agency that is keeping people healthy into the future by providing the tools to maintain healthy lives,” said Sandra Bodley.**

own rather than be a captive of another institution. (Being financially viable in the community is a big step for growing into the future.”

**Where we are today**

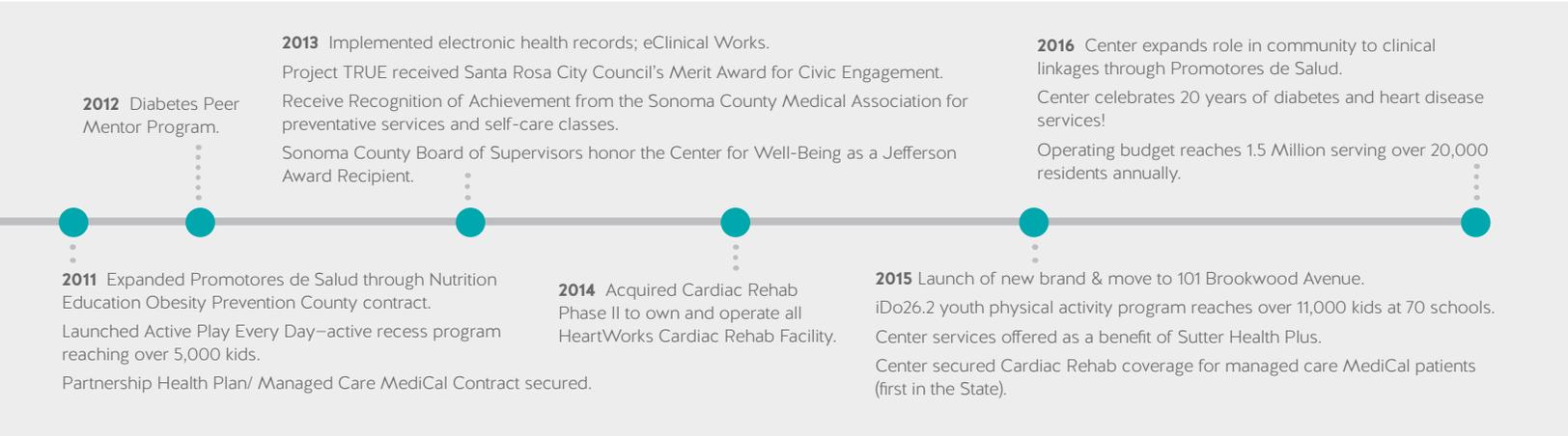


**Sandra Bodley, Board Member 1996-2014**

For the first ten years, Sandra Bodley (Board President '06-'07) felt the Center was the best kept secret in Sonoma County. She has been delighted by the growth of the Center in the second decade of existence, to become an organization driving significant health policy in the County, chairing county wide coalitions (e.g. Alena’s role as the chair of the Health Action steering committee), empowering community via Promotora de Salud, to being a leader in tobacco prevention.

“The Center grew from a relatively unknown organization to a well-established organization that provides a recognized, state of science preventative and restorative healthcare

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Jim Adams, Board Member  
2008-2014

throughout the county,” said Jim Adams, a past Board Member including Board President for two years (’12-’14).

This growth enabled the Center to relocate to our current downtown location increasing patient access to our services, grow our community-based prevention team,

identified and emerging community needs. “Our vision for a healthy community is rooted in health access and goes beyond chronic disease management at the individual level. For the Center, health access includes living in a place that is safe for physical activity, where nutrient rich foods are accessible and policies are in place protecting the health of our most vulnerable residents. Because of this vision, we tackle chronic disease from every angle. I am most proud of our ability to engage residents to make healthy changes for themselves, their families and their community.” –Alena Wall, Executive Director (2007–current).

Ongoing support from individual donors, businesses, hospitals, the County and statewide agencies has enabled the Center to grow our reach from an initial 1,200 people per year (1997) to 20,000 people currently.

The Center for Well-Being is dedicated to expanding access to disease preventive programs and chronic disease self-management, improving community health to defeat chronic disease through high quality, cost efficient services and community engagement. Through our services, community members are equipped with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to adopt healthy lifestyles and to facilitate environmental changes that impact health where our residents work, live and play.

**Will you join the fight?** As the Center looks to the next 20 years of building a better, healthier future for people across the North Bay, we see substantial growth enabling us to take our services where they are needed most. **This requires you.** Join us, and together we can make the greatest impact, to defeat chronic disease throughout our community.

*“I invest in the Center for Well-Being because it is the one organization in Sonoma County that is 100% committed to provide for people of all walks of life without party affiliation to one medical group, allowing the Center to not be limited by political will. The Center does what healthcare is supposed to do—providing preventative and restorative care to people who need it most,” said Jim Adams.*

and expand scholarships offered to those who could not otherwise afford this level of support. Throughout the entire history of the Center, it has remained an independent entity with a very committed Board and consistency of leadership and staff—a key to the success of the agency.

### Investing in the Future

The Center has expanded its programs since its inception twenty years ago, adding many new services in response to



Surani Kwan, Board Member  
2012–Current Board Member

*“When I think about the work the Center has done in our community for the past 20 years, I am in awe over the number of lives changed by the education our team has provided. And the impact of one person attending class doesn’t stop with them—it affects everyone in their life because of the changes they make in how they manage their diet, exercise and lifestyle. The gift the Center has brought to our communities is a healthier future for literally thousands of people,” shared Surani Hayre-Kwan FNP, MBA Executive Director of Patient Acquisition and Experience, Sutter Pacific Medical Foundation.*