

Immigrants represent about one-fourth of residents in Palatine, a diverse suburb in Cook County. For this population, language and economic barriers often present challenges in accessing basic healthcare and other essential services.

In 1998, Northwest Community Healthcare (NCH) and many community leaders saw an opportunity to bridge the divide. NCH purchased a 20,000-square-foot former retail store in Palatine and converted the space into the Community Resource Center—a central location for residents in need. They then invited many vital social service agencies to provide services at the center.

With the Center's help, Ana Flores was able to earn her GED, chief nursing assistant certificate and driver's license. Staff even assisted her with becoming a U.S. citizen.

"Coming to the Community Resource Center gave me a connection with people and an understanding that I wasn't the only one needing help," said Flores. "The Center energized me and helped me realize that I was smart and capable to do more things."

NCH works closely with Partners for Our Communities (POC), a non-profit organization that manages day-to-day operations at the center. Through the center, local residents can access these multilingual services:

- Health and wellness;
- Education and literacy;
- Food and clothing;
- Employment assistance;
- Counseling and social services; and
- Leadership and youth development.

NCH funds the center, which handles 200,000 visits every year. The hospital also provides a community nurse and community worker to help patients manage medical needs and connect with social services.

"I'm so proud to be part of both organizations and I've seen the impact that it has made on individuals and families in this community," said Karen Baker, the hospital's Executive Director of Community Services & Advocacy.

For a virtual tour of the place that has changed so many lives, watch [this video](#).

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