

VERMONT READS 2022



EVERY YEAR, since 2003, Vermont Humanities, a statewide nonprofit based in Montpelier, has invited students, adults, and seniors across the state to read the same book and participate in a wide variety of community activities related to the book's themes. It's a program called Vermont Reads.

We are THRILLED to announce that our *The Most Costly Journey* book has been picked as Vermont Reads 2022! The announcement was made on Saturday, April 30th, at the Vermont Book Award ceremony in Montpelier.

The book, a series of comics telling the stories of Open Door Clinic's patients and other agricultural workers and drawn by New England cartoonists, was released as a book in the summer of 2021. All of the stories are available on our website at opendoormidd.org/most-costly-journey/, where there is also a link for purchasing the book.

Marek Bennett, one of the four editors of the book and one of the cartoonists involved, celebrates how far these stories will reach. "Being a Vermont Reads book means getting these stories out into SO MANY different libraries, communities and reading groups all around the state. It calls much attention to these local stories of resilience and survival, stories that have gone untold and unseen by most Vermonters for many years. It multiplies and leverages all the work that's gone into the project from all our storytellers, artists, field workers, translators."

The project *The Most Costly Journey / El Viaje Más Caro* started back in the winter of 2015/2016, when Julia Doucet, ODC's outreach nurse, led a team of staff members and volunteers to collect stories from patients and others. A total of 47 people were involved, between storytellers, interviewers, transcribers, translators, proofreaders, and artists. The idea was to address mental health needs in the community, but its unique trajectory took off from there.

For Teresa Mares, another editor of the book, being chosen as the Vermont Reads book shows how universal these stories are. "This is a story that is pertinent to everyone. Whether you work in the food system or not, your wellbeing depends on the workers represented in this book and it is essential to know more about their lives," she says.

Ryan Newswanger, Interim Director of Programs and Communications at Vermont Humanities, explains how judicious the selection process was. It started with a list of 45 choices suggested by schoolteachers, booksellers, authors, members of the general public, their staff and board. Once the long list was narrowed to a short list of four or five finalists, the books were read and discussed by a community advisory panel.

Newswanger explains that "Vermont Reads books must cover a broad range of themes of interest to Vermont communities, they must be accessible to everyone from middle-school students to elders, and they must offer inspired opportunities for community projects that go beyond simple book groups to include creative activities that help Vermonters engage with the text in meaningful, fun, and exciting ways. Choosing a Vermont Reads book is no small thing – the process begins almost a year before the choice is announced, and after a final choice is made, Vermont Humanities hits the road for about four months of prep-work with partner organizations around the state to create project resources and curricula and offer robust suggestions for community organizations interested in working with the book."

Over 200 different Vermont towns, cities, and villages have participated in Vermont Reads since its founding in 2003. *The Most Costly Journey* is the book they have chosen for the 20th anniversary of this engaging program.

"I hope it will also bring some attention, understanding, and empathy to our wider national discussion about immigration, citizenship, and how we feed our communities," Bennett concludes.



Julia Doucet, RN collects a story at a patient's house



WE HAD BEEN LOOKING for additional help for a while, but during a global pandemic, hiring a new nurse proved to be a big challenge. Through the grapevine, Martha Redpath learned about our search. “I really haven’t been a nurse in so long, I don’t know much about nursing, but I thought if they need help, I can do anything for one day a week.” It’s now been over a year since Martha joined our team. How has she enjoyed it?

Question: What do you think is the most important thing people should know about you?

Martha Redpath: I am a mother, a wife, a midwife for many years, and now I’m a nurse. I love biking, I love adventure biking with my family and friends, I love dogs, I love babies, I love having a house full with family and friends together. It’s chaotic and it’s fun.

Q: How did you first hear about the Open Door Clinic?

M: I first knew about it through Anna Cowles, who was a nurse practitioner when Open Door Clinic ran out of a school bus. She was my midwife when I was first having my babies. We often would chat in Vergennes when the bus was there. That was my first exposure to the concept of care that was provided here. A few years ago, Heidi [Sulis, ODC’s Executive Director] gave a presentation to our group, the Women of Wisdom, which operates a store, Sweet Charity, in Vergennes, and is very involved in philanthropic giving. Then, I think it was 2021 that somebody said to me ‘the Open Door Clinic is looking for a nurse’, and I still have a nursing license, though I retired as a midwife. I really haven’t been a nurse in so long, I don’t know much about nursing, but I thought if they need help, I can do anything for one day a week. Then, boom, Covid vaccines, screening, tests erupted, and I was happily flexible and able to just go with whatever was needed and work during that busy, busy time. It feels like it was meant to be. I’m grateful to be able to help support the work here.

Q: I’m sure the patients are very grateful that you are here too.

M: It’s interesting, because I have so little Spanish skills, there is very little actual patient interaction for me, but I feel I’m the back up to support the staff. It’s a little tiny part to help the bigger work happen, and I never know what I’m going to do when I come through the door. The bulk of the work initially was the vaccination campaign against Covid, and now sometimes we are out on the farms, knocking on doors, offering vaccines and tests, and sometimes I’m just here in the office to help put information into the database. I’m happy to do whatever is needed.

Q. What have you enjoyed the most since you started?

“ **I feel proud of how the clinic has worked.** ”

M: I love being part of true public health at its best, in its holistic and comprehensive concept. If we knock on somebody’s door to give a vaccine, someone else will come downstairs and say: “Actually, I have a rash, could you look at it?”, or “I have a shoulder that’s troublesome”, and you’re able to address that, set up and appointment for that. It’s a relief to me to see care is given where it’s needed and not based on the mechanistic medical care that has become part of the bigger systems. It’s a relief and a joy to be: “what are the needs, and how can we address them”, and not have to worry about the administrative headaches.

Q: Is there a story or an episode that you’ve experienced while working that you would like to share?

M: Last week, we had a call from someone concerned about Covid, and we went out with PCR tests and vaccines. We were there to meet this one woman, but everyone at this temporary housing setting came out, curious about who were those

“ It is amazing to see the willingness and openness of the workers to line up and get their vaccines.”

Martha Redpath, RN

people in the white van with Open Door Clinic on the side. We ended up doing five tests and giving three vaccines to people we had not expected to see. We just went out and spent probably an hour there, sort of planting those seeds of trust in the community of a population who otherwise wouldn't have access to the care, or have transportation issues to get to the care, or are discriminated against when they call with their concerns, and we have the time and the heart to listen and to provide with what they needed to feel better. So that was really great. Every week there is something like that.

Q: How did you feel bringing the vaccine to the farms? Had you been to a dairy farm before?

M: I had been to a couple of smaller dairy farms, but not to the same degree. I loved the times when we would be going to the milking areas and just rolling up people's sleeves and giving them the vaccine there, providing information, and finding such openness and good humor. The work that Julia has done over the years with the outreach program, building that layer of trust, has been essential. When she does walk in and say "I'm from the Open Door Clinic", people will know who she is and have this base of trust. Those first clinics were a bit overwhelming, I can't remember how many vaccines per week we were doing, 30, 40, 50 vaccines at each farm. It was a fun puzzle to set up the system, and each time we would go back, the system had improved a little bit. It is amazing to see the willingness and openness of the workers to line up and get their vaccines.

Q: How does it feel to be part of this movement that the clinic created to tackle Covid?

M: I feel proud of how the clinic has worked. If the Open Door Clinic had not been here with their base of support and relationship with the migrant community before Covid, I don't know that we would have such high efficacy rates of disseminating the vaccine. I feel honored to be part of this very big-hearted network of people willing and wanting to do whatever is needed. Every week I feel like I'm learning more. It's been a great opportunity and eye-opening for me to see more of the needs on the ground. I had a little bit of exposure to that through my midwifery practice when Spanish-speaking women would come for their pre-natal care with an interpreter, but to actually see the living environments, some which are very nice, some which are really a challenge, it's been very helpful. And see that people will have a vision of what the needs are and be able to address those needs with food, and clothing, and networking... I feel totally lucky.

The Open Door Clinic is like a hidden gem of work that's happening, and often people misunderstand or have no knowledge of what is being done in the community. People need to know that there are hopeful, positive things happening in our own community. Even during Covid, to have that community support is a testament to people supporting what we do here. Also, the collaboration with the Health Department has been really admirable. It has been really heart warming to work here.



DENTAL

While Gretchen Dunn, our dental hygienist, is on medical leave to have surgery on both her thumbs, Lisa Beayon has been covering for her. Lisa has been a dental hygienist for 22 years. "I enjoy



working with patients and helping them to achieve their healthy dental hygiene goals."

VOLUNTEER

Since 2019, ODC has had a volunteer American Sign Language interpreter.



Cory Brunner has been a nationally credentialed ASL interpreter for 20+ years. "I became an interpreter after hearing about a deaf friend having a hard time finding interpreters for his surgery. I changed majors and secured a BS in interpreting and have been working in the field ever since."

BUSY SPRING

CHANGES THE NEW SEASON HAS BROUGHT

STAFF



After two years, Paola Meza is leaving ODC's Patient Services Coordinator position to move back to LA, where she is from and where her husband, Rich Brach, was matched for his medical residency. Paola's involvement with ODC began in 2014, when she was a freshman at Middlebury College and became a volunteer. She'll be greatly missed! Sara Flores-Amper, graduating from UVM this spring, has already started to be trained to replace Paola. Welcome, Sara!



VOLUNTEER

On April 9, 2022 we resumed ODC volunteer training in-person! Middlebury College and Juntos, a student-run organization, hosted us at the beautiful Hillcrest building. We had 27 people attending, four of them remotely, and 14 interested in becoming interpreters.

1.2% Other

USES 2021



Our winter newsletter mistakenly featured ODC's financial

wheel for uses. The correct numbers are: 66.4% for Clinical Programs, 32.4% for Administration, and 1.2% for Other.

DENTAL



Dalena Huynh and Christopher Goding are both 4th year students at the University of New England College of Dental Medicine. Dalena saw our patients at Middlebury Dental Group from February through April, and Christopher is joining us from June to August. We—and our patients— appreciate their dedication and hard work!



“ It was so great to meet you and part of the ODC team. It was honestly one of the coolest Saturdays I have had in a long time. ”

Andrés Santana attended ODC training in April 22



AWARD

Kevin Mata, ODC's summer 2021 intern, received Middlebury College's Dana Morosini Reeve '84 Memorial Public Service Award,

given to the student who best exemplifies Dana's spirit and determination. Heidi Sulis and Paola Meza attended the ceremony, on May 4th.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

Via check

Open Door Clinic
100 Porter Drive
Middlebury, VT 05753

On our website

www.opendoormidd.org/donate

On Amazon Smile

Look for Community Health Services of Addison County

On Facebook

facebook.com/opendoorclinicvt

Sunshine Fund

During August 1-15, 100% of donations that received from Lawson's Finest Liquids' taproom guests in Waitsfield and through their online store will be allocated to us.

Cheers!