



NYC  
HEALTH+  
HOSPITALS

Elmhurst

**SPOTLIGHT ON  
SOCIAL WORK 2017**





**CECILIA GAVIGAN**  
Specialty Clinics

**“We touch people’s lives in every aspect – emotional, financial, getting the resources they need. You advocate on their behalf, and empower people to speak for themselves.”**



## JUHI MALHOTRA

Mobile Crisis Unit

**“Most people really just want to be heard; if you can do that, you can make a human connection. That’s the essence of Social Work – it stays consistent, no matter how crazy our world gets.”**





## MAE SIEGEL

Adolescent Protection Clinic

**“I help teenagers explore mind-body connections. Stress management, emotions, relationships, lifestyle, education – all of that is part of being a healthy person.”**



## LINDSAY WALLACE

Child Life Program

**“I like being the person who can sit down and relax the child, make them comfortable, help them get through their procedure.”**



**SIERRA WALTON**  
NICU

**“In the NICU, moms are there together and we work to build a support team. Patients call us their second family. It’s very rewarding when patients say that.”**





## **CHRISTINA DIFAVA**

Inpatient OB

**“I find it rewarding to work with mothers with new babies. There’s something so happy about a baby being born – it represents new beginnings, and new life.”**



## RHONDA BRYANT

Med/Surg

**“Sometimes patients call to thank me, out of the blue. One woman called, and I hadn’t spoken to her for years. She told me, ‘I still carry your card in my wallet.’”**



## RENA STAUB

Emergency Department

**“As a Social Worker in the Emergency Room, I offer presence and kindness to patients and their families in moments of crisis.”**





## REGINA AVNER

Dialysis

**“I have worked in Dialysis for most of my 32 years here. These patients inspire me by their will to survive, the fact that you can help them to have a better life.”**



## ANA GONZALEZ

Long Island High School

**“What Social Work is about is getting the best out of people; helping them fly toward their dreams, see all the possibilities.”**





## DAVID MARTINEZ

Emergency Department

**“People come because they’re suffering on some level and it’s not about a broken bone; they may have problems with their spouse or money and no other place to turn. We’re like an oasis in the middle of Queens.”**



**DENISE BRYANT-BROOKS**

Inpatient Psychiatry

**“Life has dealt these kids a difficult hand – they’re dealing with grief, hopelessness, abandonment. We give them the tools they need to cope, and begin to dream again.”**





## Leah Weinzimer

Libertas Center for Human Rights

**“I’m struck by how much strength our clients have. They’ve gotten themselves out of horrible situations, they have the internal resources to advocate for themselves and survive.”**



## Cassandra Kumah

Med/Surg

**“I tell my patients,  
‘Whatever it is, you  
have to get it out. You  
can talk to someone,  
you can write, you can  
paint, you can take a  
walk. Don’t harbor  
feelings – it’s good to  
release them.’”**



## Alex Guzman

I.D. Clinic

**“People with a new diagnosis feel like their whole world has fallen apart. We’re there, in a sense, to help put everything together again.”**





## KATHLEEN REEVES

Inpatient Psychiatry

**“I love working with adolescents because I feel it’s a hopeful time. Whatever interventions we make now can really have a lasting impact on their life.”**



**Rosa Alva**  
I.D. Clinic

**“We’re not only there when something bad happens, but also when it’s something good. Sometimes patients really want you to be part of their lives. I love that!”**





## **Julissa Hernandez**

Women's Health

**“Social Work is hard work and lots of people say, ‘Why do you do it?’ It’s just a feeling, like, you did something good. You helped someone. And we do get some happy endings!”**



## Josh Kleinmuntz

Pediatrics

**“This work is a constant reminder, we don’t all come to life with an even hand. You see a baby five days after birth, going back to live in a shelter. That baby is not starting out with the same opportunities that another child might.”**





**Alpana Patel**  
SAVI Program

**“The richness of the work is beyond what I ever imagined. I get to bear witness to survivors’ stories, and that’s very powerful for me.”**



## Yi Zhang

Adult Behavioral Health  
Services

**“It’s sad to see mental illness stigmatized. People are suffering, but not knowing why or what it is. When we tell them there’s a name for it, it doesn’t feel so scary.”**



## Eden Gettinger

Partial Hospitalization  
Program

**“Every single day we learn from these kids. They’re so strong, so able to express themselves. They work hard and they inspire each other and inspire us.”**





## McCall Adams

Methadone Clinic

**“A lot of people don’t have support... some never get to hear ‘I’m proud of you’ or ‘you did a great job.’ One positive affirmation could change their whole day.”**



## Steven Zhou

Asian Mental Health Clinic

**“What motivates me is the desire to see people live well and meet their cultural expectations with their families. For Asian families that’s like the Holy Grail, and mental illness gets in the way.”**



## Laura Weill

Adult Behavioral  
Health Services

**“This is a line of work that puts honesty and truth at a premium. It’s refreshing to be in a field where you’re looking for what really exists – how to come to terms with it and use it to your benefit.”**





## Amy Weinstein

Child Protection Coordinator

**“There’s an overlap between spirituality and Social Work. What’s going on between you can be more meaningful than what you’re actually working on.”**





## Lauren Clifford

Med/Surg

**“The patients I mostly see are when there’s a big trauma or change in their life. I support them, make eye contact and hold their hand.”**





## Ivan Torres

Med/Surg

**“Honestly, this profession speaks to me on a personal level. I have a father with needs that weren’t met in another hospital. Seeing how helpless he felt geared me towards wanting to be a Social Worker so I could prevent that for other people.”**



## Jennifer Sarcone

Senior Care Clinic

**“I enjoy working with older people - we’re all going to be older at some point. I’m giving back to people who gave a lot of themselves over their lives.”**



## Jean Cheng

Inpatient Psychiatry

**“My role is discharge planning. I put the best plan in place for patients—supports, and services—so they don’t have to struggle on their own.”**





## Melissa Citrin

Comprehensive Psychiatric  
Evaluation Program

**“It’s hard to take the ‘I’ out of Social Work, because it is you and them. The connections you have with patients you wouldn’t have anywhere else.”**



# Allison Gillespie

Inpatient Psychiatry

**“We have a moral obligation to care for the vulnerable in society, people who cannot care for themselves.”**





## Myrna Diptee

I.D. Clinic

**“Lots of patients tell us, this is the only family they’ve got. They come here and they feel welcome with the love and the warmth that we give them.”**



# Jaclyn Gee

Child Life Program

**“We turn negative experiences into positive ones by incorporating play... children focus on that instead of being in the hospital.”**





## VICTOR SNYDER

Director

**”Our Social Workers help to change lives – one life at a time. Often, it's the small things we do for patients that have the most profound impact.”**





## Tatiana Celcis

Emergency Department

**“I chose Social Work because I wanted to do something that would make me happy. Life’s too short to have a job that doesn’t benefit anyone.”**





## Rebecca Carman

SAFE Program/Special  
Projects

**Spotlight on Social Work is the most inspiring project I've ever worked on. This is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the vital role of Elmhurst's Social Work team!"**



**NYC Health+Hospital/Elmhurst Social Workers are assigned to every division, department, and off-site location. The majority have worked here five years or more, reflecting their deep commitment to Elmhurst's patient population and the ideals of the profession.**



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# Elmhurst



Photos & Interviews by  
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# Elmhurst

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