Now entering its 10th year, the UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health (CoE) has been a beacon for the San Francisco Bay Area.

The only nationally designated Center of Excellence of its kind in Northern California is an established health service provider, valuable resource and partner with the community in promoting women’s health.

Taking a unique approach to health care, the CoE is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of women and girls. By partnering with the community and establishing communication, trust and common goals, the CoE has been able to develop programs and provide resources that reflect the health needs and concerns of all women.

“When we are able to combine the resources of the University with the energy of the community, we are able to move mountains,” said Nancy Milliken, MD, vice dean of the UCSF School of Medicine, associate clinical professor, obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences, and director of the CoE. “We have found that we can make a profound impact when we work together as one. We take into account all factors in designing our programs — age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability — and work with partners that have a common goal.”

Locally, programs such as the Young Women’s Health Conference has for the past six years empowered up to 1,300 young women annually. These women face increasingly grown-up issues and the need to become more informed about their health and life options. The annual conference tackles such topics as domestic violence and reproductive rights, offering resources and connecting young women and their families to support agencies.

Every year, special women’s health conferences and collaborations are planned with community organizations and city agencies to address specific, relevant women’s health issues. The CoE also partners with the UCSF Center for Gender Equity offering free weekly talks on women’s health that are streamed on the web.

An offshoot of a 2005 Women’s Health Summit, where local advocates, educators, health care providers, policy administrators and researchers convened at UCSF, is the Universal Healthcare Working Group (UHC). Representing regional community organizations, the UHC was formed to raise awareness of the importance of including women’s health and cultural competencies in discussions on universal health care.

Center for Health As a multidisciplinary center that combines innovative research with preventive and therapeutic care, the CoE allows individuals and communities to enhance their choices about health. In effect, the CoE is truly a “one-stop shop” for women’s health. At the Women’s Health Center, patients and members of the community can participate in the CoE...
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Internship Program, take classes and workshops, gain knowledge about current health topics, find links to community resources and even breastfeed their baby.

In an effort to serve all communities, vital health information can be found in multiple languages. A brochure that encourages discussion between women and their providers and emphasizes the importance of safe pregnancies is now available in English, Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog and Russian. The brochure is a product of collaboration among CoE and five city and community organizations. And by participating in citywide collaborations like Bayview Mobilization for Adolescent Growth in Our Communities, where teams venture to neighborhoods to mobilize community leaders, social service providers, schools, church communities and families, important outreach can be made.

The CoE is also affecting women’s health on a national level through a granting program with Johnson & Johnson. This program aims to explore and establish egalitarian and powerful academic-community partnerships and to create a new model of women’s health that includes diverse communities of women. It has created a powerful national network of academic-community partnerships striving to advance the health of women and girls.

“We are here to effect change,” said Milliken. “Through community-based programs and collaboration with strong partners, we are today able to celebrate the advances of the past decade.”

For more information about the UCSF National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health, call 415/353-7481 or visit their website at http://itssrv1.ucsf.edu/coe/.