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CITY MANAGER



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January 24, 2018

NEWS RELEASE

2018 Pillars of Public Health Recipients

The 2018 Pillars of Public Health are awarded every year to various members of the community. The award recipients reflect the strength and momentum that is created when individuals and organizations commit themselves to the core principles of public health. This year's recipients are:

Oralia Loza, Ph.D. – Path Builder

Dr. Oralia Loza is an associate professor at the University of Texas at El Paso in the Department of Public Health Sciences. She has a doctoral degree in public health epidemiology from the University of California at San Diego and San Diego State University Joint Doctoral Program. She now teaches biostatistics and epidemiology and mentors students in the UTEP MPH program and Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Ph.D. program. Her research interests focus on substance abuse and risks behaviors for HIV, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among high-risk populations on the U.S.-Mexico border region, including transgender women, persons who use drugs, and migrants. More recently, she has focused her service and research on LGBTQ health in the local El Paso community in collaboration with dedicated community partners such as the City of El Paso Department of Public Health. One of the major achievements of these efforts has been to increase access to LGBTQ-friendly healthcare and social services through The Purple Pages of El Paso, an online resource directory of LGBTQ-friendly healthcare and social service providers.

HIV Prevention Team – Path Builder

The HIV Prevention Program has been at the forefront of expanding HIV-related services including Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)/Re-engagement in HIV Care Navigation, which is a prevention strategy for HIV negative people at substantial risk for contracting HIV infection. Patients use antiretrovirals and regularly scheduled healthcare visits to reduce the risk of getting HIV. Daily PrEP is 90% effective in reducing the risk of contracting HIV during sex. Re-engaging HIV clinic patients to obtain medical care has also shown to reduce the transmission of HIV. CLEAR (Choosing Life: Empowerment, Action, Results) is an evidence-based HIV prevention and health promotion intervention for youth and adults living with HIV/AIDS or who are at higher risk for contracting HIV. The program aims to help clients maintain their health, reduce transmission, and improve the quality of life for those who participate.

The twice-a-month HIV Support Group offers those who are positive for HIV an opportunity to share their experiences, obtain information, and provide emotional support to one another. The M-Factor is a social network aimed at reducing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among gay and bisexual men by building positive social connections and by promoting safer sex practices, including testing.

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Sam Trujillo and Verence Acosta – Outstanding Support to Community Health for their participation and cooperation in public health preparedness training exercises in El Paso County

Sam Trujillo is the Deputy Human Resources Officer with the County of El Paso and is currently responsible for the County's Risk Management Division, which provides oversight for the County's Risk Pool Board, the Strategic Employee Health and Wellness Plan, Workers Compensation Division, Liability Division, ADA Division, Contract Management Division, and Juvenile Probation HR Department. Previously, Mr. Trujillo served 26 years with the Alamogordo Department of Public Safety. He served 10 years as the Director of Public Safety, which included Police, Fire, and Emergency Management operations.

Verence Acosta is the Risk Management HR Supervisor with the County of El Paso and currently oversees the County's Employee Benefits and Liability Division. Mrs. Acosta has been in this position for the past two years, but has been with the County's HR Department for the past six years and a half. Mrs. Acosta holds a Bachelor's Degree in HR and holds a PHR and SHRM-CP certification.

El Paso Fire Department/Vaccinations for Health Program – Advancement of Public Health Program by a City Department

The El Paso Fire Department EMS Team provides education, preventive health screenings, influenza and pneumonia vaccines, and colorectal cancer screenings through the innovative initiative referred to as the Vaccinations for Health Program. The EMS team has worked intensely on retrofitting local fire stations to serve as venues for providing these health services. Now in its fourth year of collaboration, more than 4,600 participants have received services through these clinic events, and the program has made a great impact in advancing the health status of our community. Recognized at the 2016 Texas EMS Conference in Dallas, the Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council presented the El Paso Fire Department and team with the Public Information/Injury Prevention Award.

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