



Personal Story

Build the Bridge for All

By Hong Chartrand

“Emma's life is an example to others, to pursue one's dreams, believe in making change, be strong, and progress will prevail,” U.S. Representative Raúl M. Grijalva gave high praise to Emma Torres when he introduced her as one of the Ohtli Award recipients in 2005. The award is the highest recognition issued by the Mexico government to acknowledge individuals' contributions to the development of Hispanic communities outside Mexico. The word Ohtli means “righteous path” in Nahuatl, a language spoken by Nahua people, most of whom live in Central Mexico.

Emma Torres is the co-founder and current Executive Director of Campesinos Sin Fronteras (CSF), a grassroots, community-based organization to improve the standard of living for migrant farmworkers through education and advocacy in Yuma, Arizona. Emma is a pioneer, starting the promotora model and training the first promotoras to serve the migrant farmworkers in Arizona beginning in 1987.

It's Emma's passion to serve and advocate for the migrant farmworkers, because she was one of them. When she was 12 years old, Emma started to help her parents in the fields, half of the year in California's sun-scorched field to pick strawberries and potatoes and half of the year back in Yuma, Arizona. It was a hard life, but in Emma's point of view, she “had a happy childhood life.” Her unique childhood shaped her to be strong and persistent. “I'm a fighter, and I have not given in to the circumstances that have found me,” says Emma.

At age 17, Emma joined the Cesar Chavez movement. At 24 years old, her life took a turn. Her husband, a farmworker as well, passed away from Leukemia, leaving Emma with two young children, no money, no education and no English skill. The social worker who took care of her late husband and people with Women, Infant and Children (WIC) helped the devastated Emma go through complicated health and social systems, which inspired her to make the decision to be one of them. *(Continued on page 4)*



Dia del Campesino, CSF's signature event, has been held for the past 17 years. It is the Annual Day of The Farmworker, on which CSF serves more than 5,000 farmworkers, starting at 2:00 am and going until 12:00 pm. The event provides free flu shots, health screenings, housing, education and immigration information/education to farmworkers. In addition, the event provides breakfast, raffles, gifts and entertainment. It is the only event in Yuma County of this magnitude that is conducted to celebrate and give recognition for farmworkers' contribution to our economy and society. In the photo, the City of San Luis Mayor (left) and Emma Torres (center) are presenting the “Farmworker of the Year” Award to a lady who was nominated by her co-workers. The award, plus a monetary gift, is provided to two people who are selected from a pool of nominees from the farmworker community each year.

Safe Routes Programs Support Student Health by Connecting Communities

By Paul Katan

For many Arizona communities, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) looks fondly to the past for solutions to today's health issues. Its objective is simple: help more kids walk and bike to school safely. It conjures images of a simpler time when everyone would walk to school and no one heard the words "childhood" and "obesity" used together. Through SRTS programs, many communities are coming to understand the vital relationships between community design, transportation and health outcomes. By using "the five E's" of education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation and engineering, SRTS programs are forging partnerships that are improving social determinants of health. Yavapai County, which is home to five SRTS programs, offers a number of examples how these partnerships are promoting a culture of health in both urban and rural communities.

Arizona's first territorial capitol, the city of Prescott is home to Yavapai's first SRTS program. This program, conducted by Prescott Alternative Transportation (PAT) since 2007, was also the first in the country to use school murals as an encouragement toward activity. The program has grown through partnerships and use of the five E's; one mural tells the story of supporting student health in a changing community.



"Go on Green" Mural
Miller Valley Elementary School, Prescott, AZ

Arizona Health Disparities Center

Mission:

To promote and protect the health and well being of the minority and vulnerable populations of Arizona by enhancing the capacity of the public health system to effectively serve minority populations and reduce health disparities.

Vision:

Health equity for all

We envision a state where each person has equal opportunity to prevent and overcome disease and live a longer, healthier life.

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The Miller Valley Elementary "Go on Green" mural literally is a picture of students being active, while beset by modern trends such as increased automobile traffic. Painted in 2010, the mural's images were seen in the wake of the 2007-2009 recession. The prominent images of children may have been a reminder of an economic reality: Arizona children living in poverty more than doubled between 2003 and 2010. Featuring students from the school (Prescott's most culturally diverse, with 82% of students on free or reduced lunch), the mural's images sparked a broad community dialogue about the changing demographics of "everybody's hometown." Today the mural continues to raise awareness of students and the inextricable links between health, education and poverty.

To date, the Prescott program has grown to two school districts, two cities and a Walking School Bus program. The City of Prescott has also successfully applied for almost \$1 million in SRTS infrastructure funds to improve pedestrian safety around six schools.

In 2008, Yavapai County Community Health Services (YCCHS) began SRTS programs in the City of Cottonwood and the Verde Valley. Mirroring the Prescott programs, YCCHS' programs have also grown quickly through activities such as Walk to School Day and bike rodeos. Their program regularly conducts pedestrian and bicycle education with K-8 schools throughout the Verde Valley, as well as at community events. In addition to their work with schools, the program partners with city staff and the Verde Valley Cyclists Coalition to promote the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in road improvements.

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Arizona Diabetes Prevention and Control Program

By Carmen Ramirez

The Arizona Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, through its partnership with the Arizona Diabetes Coalition, works to prevent diabetes by developing Arizona's capacity to reduce the incidence and severity of diabetes and related complications. The Program also monitors the burden of diabetes in Arizona and coordinates educational opportunities and approaches to the provision of diabetes care and services throughout Arizona.

The Arizona Diabetes Burden Report, published in the spring of 2012, estimates that 6.3% of Arizonans have prediabetes, a condition with elevated blood sugars but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. The report also indicates that in our state 9% of Arizonans have diabetes. A higher risk for Type 2 diabetes occurs in African Americans, Asian and Pacific Island Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, and Native Americans. Arizona is home to a large Latino/Hispanic and Native American population.

It is critical to provide people at risk for prediabetes or who already have diabetes with available, affordable, accessible, acceptable, and appropriate health care. People at risk for diabetes should be referred to a diabetes prevention program. In addition Diabetes Self-Management Training/Education, which is the cornerstone of preventing or reducing diabetes complications, must be made available to everybody with diabetes.

For more information, please contact Carmen Ramirez at 602-542-8261 or Carmen.Ramirez@azdhs.gov or visit <http://www.azdhs.gov/azdiabetes/>.

Diabetes Resources

www.azdiabetes.gov

602-542-8261

www.cdc.gov/diabetes/

1-800-232-4636

www.ndep.nih.gov

1-301-496-3583

www.diabetes.niddk.nih.gov

1-800-860-8747

www.diabetes.org

1-800-342-2383

www.medicare.gov

1-800-633-4227

www.diabeteseducator.org/

1-800-338-3633

Sliding Fee Clinics in Arizona

<http://www.azdhs.gov/hsd/pdf/SlidingFeeClinics.pdf>

Safe Routes Programs Support Student Health by Connecting Communities

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The partners' collective work was recently recognized by the League of American Bicyclists, who designated the City of Cottonwood as a Bicycle Friendly Community in 2012.

The future of SRTS in Yavapai County looks a lot like the past. In 2011 YCCHS began work to promote safe biking and walking in more rural communities. Compared with Yavapai's cities, rural communities are often lacking infrastructure that make walking and bicycling an attractive option. Considering the often greater numbers of folks living in poverty and other challenges (i.e. no access to fresh fruits or vegetables, recreation facilities), there is an obvious need to address barriers to health in rural areas. As such, Safe Routes to School strategies are being used to coordinate community support and to plan for improvements that will make health an easier choice for kids for years to come.



Cottonwood Elementary School Students Ready to Walk,
Walk to School Day 2011

Build the Bridge for All

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Emma studied English, earned her GED and went to college to study to become a social worker. At the same time, she applied to be a receptionist at a WIC office in Yuma. It was a tough period of time for Emma. She had to endure criticism from neighbors and family members who thought she should assume the traditional role of a widow, weeping, crying, earning sympathy and receiving help from others. Criticism made Emma angry and stronger. She got the WIC job, and six years later Emma became a migrant liaison for the Valley Health Center Clinic in Somerton. There she developed the Western Migrant Network Tracking System to coordinate medical services for farmworker women as they migrated in and out of state. Later, Emma was hired to open new *promotora* programs in western Arizona. Under her leadership, Emma has changed how many doctors and public health workers think about *promotoras*, who should be an asset in the public health and medical fields and as a bridge connecting community members and health providers. In 1994, Emma was appointed to the National Council on Migrant Health by the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala. In 2003 Emma was appointed to the US/Mexico Border Health Binational Commission by President George W. Bush.

Since then, Emma has assumed different positions with different capacities in the migrant farmworker health field, and she is now considered an expert on migrant farmworker health issues in the United States. She received numerous awards and recognitions, such as the Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leadership Award, the *Orgullo Hispano* and was recognized as U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association Health Care Worker of the Year.

Emma is a strong believer in education. Juggling school with her busy work schedule, she recently received her Master's degree in Social Worker, which is an inspiration to her children. They all graduated from college and one received a law degree.

"I have a vision to ensure to build the path for others who are coming behind me. So they don't have to struggle so much as I did," says Emma.



As one of community advocate points out, "Emma has impacted her community by pouring herself into something that will last her lifetime: decent health care for



Farmworkers attended *Dia del Campesino*.

the working poor. In doing so, Emma has inspired me and many others to sacrificial giving. Her quest for justice and wholeness for the working poor family goes on. She has changed the face of social service locally." ♦

Publications of Interest:

Disparities in Health and Health Care: Five Key Questions and Answers

This brief provides an introduction to health and health care disparities, not only for racial and ethnic groups but also for groups defined by other characteristics, such as socioeconomic status, geographic location, age and language.

<http://www.kff.org/minorityhealth/upload/8396.pdf>

The State of Urban Health: Eliminating Health Disparities to Save Lives and Cut Costs

This report helps to make the case for why although the complexity of factors contributing to health disparities makes eliminating them costly, inaction or action that results in further cuts to important health programs that help to address these disparities will prove to be much more costly. Therefore, allocating the appropriate amount of financial resources to reduce racial/ethnic disparities in health is not only a moral imperative, but also a fiscally responsible one.

http://iamempowered.com/sites/default/files/nul_state_of_urban_health_2012_report_.pdf ♦

Funding Opportunities:

Pfizer Medical Education Group (PMEG): Adolescent Immunization – Deadline: February 27, 2013 – Letter of Intent

Purpose: to support organizations with a focus in healthcare professional education and quality improvement to provide projects related to overcoming barriers to adolescent immunization. Barriers may be related to health care providers, patients, caregivers, or systems.

Eligible Applicants: Local Government, Academic Institutions, Consortia and Non Profits

Total of amount: \$750,000 is available to support awards of up to \$500,000

Contact: Susan Connelly at susan.connelly@pfizer.com
http://www.pfizer.com/files/responsibility/grants_contributions/rfp_adolescent_immunization.pdf ♦

For more information about funding opportunities, publications of interest and events of interest, please visit www.azminorityhealth.gov. ♦

Events of Interest:

10th National Community Health Conference

Dates: March 12 – 14, 2013

Location: Hyatt Regency at the Arch, St. Louis, Missouri

<http://www.communityhlth.org/communityhlth/conf2013/annual13.html>

11th Annual Research Conference: Advancing Health Equity through Community-Based Participatory Research

Date: April 19, 2013

Location: Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel, Phoenix, AZ

www.sirc.asu.edu

Health Disparities Research at the Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, and Disability: A National Conference

Dates: April 25 – 26, 2013

Location: Washington, DC

<http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/research/centers-institutes/institute-on-development-and-disability/public-health-programs/project-intersect/index.cfm> ♦

Editor's Note:

The *AHDCconnection* is published quarterly on January 31, April 30, July 31 and October 31. We are looking for community stories and other leads that are related to efforts to reduce health disparities in Arizona. Because of space limitation, each submitted community story should not be more than 500 words. Ideas for community stories are also welcome. Our deadline is the 15th of month prior to the publication date. Please email articles or ideas to the editor at hong.chartrand@azdhs.gov. ♦

