

Hispanic Heritage Month Achievers Awards



WINNERS



Allison Fernandez, M.D., M.B.A.
*Anesthesiologist
Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital*

Allison Fernandez is dedicated to addressing health care disparities for her patients, the Hispanic community and the Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital's neighboring community in St. Petersburg, Florida. She developed the hospital's acute and chronic pain service, and assembled a team of practitioners to assist with pain management for children having surgery. She was the lead Hispanic physician on a team that developed the Spanish version of the Pedi Crises app, which will help save the lives of children around the world.

All Children's Hospital provides one of the few chronic pain clinics in Florida with a largely Spanish speaking patient population. Dr. Fernandez is bilingual, and she communicates with compassion. She brings comfort to families who rely on her to provide difficult and sometimes complicated information.

Dr. Fernandez also finds time to participate in research in pain management and blood management, and she published several manuscripts on these topics. Dr. Fernandez exemplifies leadership and co-chairs the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee at Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital. As a mentor, she works with female senior anesthesia leaders throughout the country to translate lessons learned through their experiences to facilitate advancement in careers of other women anesthesiologists.

Cindi Reyes
*Care Manager
Grand Oaks Assisted Living Facility
Sibley Memorial Hospital*

Cindy Reyes is a caring team member who is well loved by residents, families and staff at Grand Oaks. She takes the initiative to get to know each resident, and she makes everyone's day a little better by paying attention to the details. Reyes initially joined the team serving residents with dementia and is now a member of the assisted living care team.

Last year, Cindi Reyes became the face of COVID-19 vaccination acceptance, and championed the importance of getting the vaccine to the Latinx community. She also communicated the importance of better access to health care services and how fortunate everyone in Washington, D.C., is to have access to free health care. Her efforts earned her wide recognition, and she was interviewed for the online publication *El Tiempo Latino*.

In 2003, Reyes started one of the first LGBTQ Latinx groups for immigrants in Washington. She continues to be a champion and volunteer for the entire LGBTQ community.

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WINNERS (continued)



Patricia Rios, M.P.H.
*Manager
Community Health Improvement
Suburban Hospital*

Patricia Rios leads and supports initiatives that address health disparities in the Latino community. She understands the challenges of access to health care and of vaccine hesitancy, and she used her long-standing relationship with the Latino Health Initiative to help create a successful collaboration among Suburban Hospital, Salud & Bienestar, and the Johns Hopkins Medicine COVID-19 vaccination teams. The partnership supported several vaccination clinics in the community. Rios' solutions-oriented approach also helped engage and integrate Suburban Hospital's safety-net clinic partner, Mobile Med, into operation of the vaccination clinics.

The launch of Suburban Hospital's diabetes self-management training program and ongoing conversation about language needs, particularly regarding Spanish, led Rios to initiate the hospital's Diabetes Thrive 365 meetings in Spanish. The goal is to provide a platform for diabetes education that removes language and cultural barriers, and although this program is still in its infancy, Rios wants to expand its presence across the county.

This year, Rios was presented with two new opportunities to strengthen Suburban Hospital's presence in the community and elevate the hospital's impact on health equity. Through relationships developed during a leadership program, she was invited by the nonprofit organization Community Bridges to speak to at-risk girls about careers in health care. She was also nominated by Community Reach of Montgomery County to serve on the planning committee for its annual Mansfield Kaseman Health Clinic benefit event. In that role, Rios produced a video highlighting Suburban Hospital's partnership with the clinic. Also, hospital's Latino health equity workgroup, which Rios co-leads, remains strong — members continue to be engaged and the group has become an excellent platform for information and resource exchange.

As the community committee co-chair for Hopkins Familia, the newly formed and only employee resource group at Suburban Hospital, Rios has led the team through activities that promote inclusion and diversity at Suburban Hospital. Achievements include hosting listening sessions and computer and salsa lessons. She also led workforce development projects in partnership with Centro

SOL and Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center via virtual career forums targeting Latino youth.

Rios' participation in these initiatives nurtured relationships between Suburban Hospital and other Johns Hopkins member organizations. She works hard to develop a workplace that thrives on differences rather than similarities, and she goes out of her way to get people involved in team projects that give individuals a real sense of contribution and the team a rich variety of ideas. Rios fosters an environment where people's opinions are valued. She is highly respected and valued by her peers, the community and hospital leadership, and she works well with people at all levels of the organization. Rios is a thoughtful team player who knows how to give and take.



Monica Guerrero Vazquez, M.S., M.P.H.
*Executive Director, Centro SOL
Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center*

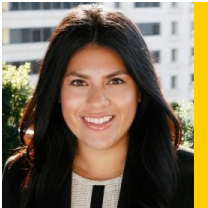
Monica Guerrero Vazquez works tirelessly to provide care to Hispanic/Latinx families throughout the Baltimore City, with special focus on undocumented immigrants who have mental health concerns. She established a youth advisory group to inform the work of Johns Hopkins' Centro SOL, and she works hard to advocate for families that have a limited voice due to their immigration status or other factors that contribute to their marginalization. She is a beacon of light providing a voice for Latinx people in several state and city groups, including the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention.

Vazquez has applied for grants and identified resources and services to help support Latinx families, many of which have a tenuous immigration status. She exemplifies excellence, and she models leadership, integrity, diversity, inclusion, respect and collegiality with colleagues. She also shows great compassion and empathy for the families for which she provides care.

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FINALISTS



Veronica Amaya, M.S.H.S.
Sibley Memorial Hospital

As a patient safety specialist for Sibley Memorial Hospital, Veronica Amaya worked closely with her colleagues in the COVID-19 vaccine distribution center. Since the appointment registrations and communications were in English, there were challenges to reaching Spanish speaking staff. Amaya was an awesome resource, offering her time and bilingual skills to translate questions and answers. She made herself available multiple times each week and, as a result, Spanish speaking team members could get answers to their questions about the vaccine and obtain the vaccine in a timely manner. This was a critical to protecting our Hispanic/Latinx workforce during the height of COVID-19.

Amaya not only embodied the Johns Hopkins Medicine core values during the time she supported the Latinx community, but she also does so every workday. As the lead for patient safety, she guides our organization to do better for our patients by working on root cause analyses and improvement projects. She exemplifies what leadership and integrity should look like for everyone on the front line who works with her and watches her navigate difficult conversations about mistakes we have made as an organization. She ensures that everyone can share their perspective and have their opinion heard. Amaya is an asset to Sibley Memorial and a great leader who can step up to the challenges of health care.



Melissa Mercedes Cuesta
The Johns Hopkins Hospital, School of Medicine

Melissa Mercedes Cuesta is a tireless advocate for Latinx community outreach. She was instrumental in the success of SARS-CoV-2 testing and vaccination efforts directed to reaching vulnerable members of the Latinx community members, and she educates community members as part of her HIV community outreach and helps connect Latinx men who have sex with men (MSM) to resources at the Johns Hopkins Health System and the Baltimore City Health Department.

As a liaison between the community and the health care infrastructure, Cuesta translates not only linguistically for patients with low English proficiency but also across cultural and technical barriers to improve access to health care for the Latinx community. She works tirelessly, and helps lead initiatives to advocate for greater inclusion of marginalized community members. She took on additional responsibilities, including new job roles, during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve access to care, and she learned new technologies.

Cuesta was instrumental in the COVID-19 response in the Latinx community regarding testing and vaccination. She worked evenings and weekends with dedication, and her calm demeanor and warm approach to patients placed everyone at ease. In addition to providing health care support, she always goes the extra mile to connect patients to other necessary services such as food or cash assistance and legal advice. She is a resourceful problem solver who works with resources that are very limited, especially for immigrants.

A consummate professional, Cuesta is a team player who works hard and strives for excellence in everything she does.

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FINALISTS



**Marlis Gonzalez-Fernandez,
M.D., Ph.D.**
The Johns Hopkins Hospital, School of Medicine

Marlis Gonzalez-Fernandez serves as a model for Hispanic/Latinx medical trainees. She regularly treats Spanish-speaking patients and can talk to them in their native language. In this way, she makes them feel more comfortable during the visit and is able to form personal connections.

Dr. Gonzalez-Fernandez improves the quality of life, both acutely and long term, of patients who have had amputation or stroke, or have swallowing, speech or language disorders. Many are Hispanic/Latinx. She sees a diverse range of acuity, with treatments ranging from botulinum toxin for patients who had a stroke and are struggling with spasticity, to prosthetics or orthotics for patients who had an amputation and regular follow-up to evaluate their progress. She also conducts research on swallowing disorders.

Dr. Gonzalez-Fernandez's teaching aptitude, kindness and leadership accomplishments make her highly deserving of the Hispanic Heritage Award. Her character is impeccable. She never hesitates to turn every opportunity into a teaching moment, often explaining concepts and terms in the examination room and giving thorough feedback to residents. She is also inclusive of others in an extraordinary way. She knows every nurse and doctor she works with, and projects a warm and gracious attitude to all the residents and medical students who work with her. Even on busy and difficult clinic days, her positive attitude shines through. She has a friendly demeanor, and her questions stimulate collaboration in the clinical care team. Dr. Gonzalez-Fernandez has the rare combination of excellence, leadership and integrity that warrants recognition



Yessica Marroquin Miranda
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Yessica Marroquin Miranda participates in many community programs to support Latinas. The El Salvador native learned during her journey to the U.S. how important helping others is to the community. As a volunteer for the Census campaign for Johns Hopkins' Centro SOL, she counted Latinos and demonstrated great leadership skills and a positive attitude. Miranda is now a health care access navigator and community health worker for Centro SOL and the Children's Medical Practice.

Miranda goes above and beyond to support the Latino community. Her work was key to collecting more than 800 needs assessments in collaboration between Centro SOL and the Maryland health department. Also, she helps dozens of people every day by providing information, helping them navigate services, making referrals and, most of all, caring for people.

Demonstrating in an exemplary way how to support her community, Miranda is a model colleague and employee.