Health Care For All honors business and Latino organization for their groundbreaking approach in improving the health of Massachusetts' communities

Celebrating 30 years of health care access in MA

By Martha Vazquez

Affordable health care has been a nationwide concern and has definitely been in the minds of almost everyone in the state of Massachusetts. This was the case on Wednesday, April 15th when over 500 government officials, health care executives, business leaders and consumers gathered together at the Westin Hotel in Boston for the inauguration of Health Care For All's (HCFA) 30th anniversary campaign, which celebrates the progress made in health care access and quality in Massachusetts and also looks at the work to be done in order to make it more affordable for all.

One of HCFA's main goals was to provide health care for everyone living in the state of Massachusetts. This goal was nearly reached. "With more than 90% of adults in the state covered, HCFA remains determined to create a system that meets the needs of all consumers, including our most vulnerable," said Amy Whitcomb Slomiany, Executive Director of Health Care For All. "Now our next goal is to minimize the cost. This will take a lot of work, but we believe health care should be not only accessible, but also affordable to all."

During the event, HCFA honored an exemplary business leader and a community-based organization dedicated to making a positive impact in people's lives.

Art Hassett, Chief Executive Officer of Framingham-based Cumberland Farms, received the Health Care Leadership Award for his commitment to providing health care access to thousands of employees.

"I am honored to accept this award from Health Care For All on behalf of the more than 7,000 team members in our company. Expanding health care coverage was not only the right thing to do for our team members, it was the right thing to do for our business, too," said Art Hassett, CEO of Cumberland Farms.

"We've continued to invest in our people in ways that make health insurance because we have a core belief that our people truly make us successful. As a business, we need to make sure that our own members are happy, healthy and feel valued," Hassett said.

Hassett added that in order for any company to be successful, it must think strategically and consider the impact of health care on employees.

United Neighborhoods of Fitchburg (UNF) was the other honoree of the evening, UNF became the third recipient of the John Ambarich Community Leadership Award, which is given to an organization or individual for its outstanding commitment to improving the health and lives of vulnerable populations in Massachusetts.

UNF is a non-profit organization that has been in existence for 30 years, providing its community members with the tools necessary to succeed in life.

UNF partnered with HCFA in an unprecedented effort to raise awareness about the various health care options during the last open enrollment period. In three months, UNF passed its initial goal of knocking on 15,000 doors and reached 16,000. During the campaign, HCFA joined forces with 11 regional partners in a statewide effort to knock on 200,000 doors. With over 100 determined canvassers, HCFA was able to reach 415,000 households.

"It is such a pleasure for the United Neighborhoods of Fitchburg to receive this meaningful award," said Joao dos Santos, Executive Director of the United Neighborhoods of Fitchburg.

"Working with HCFA has been instrumental in educating our constituents about health insurance, in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way, so they can get healthy and stay healthy."

Dos Santos continued. "HCFA has the capacity resources and vision to ensure that the whole state is included in their educational and access campaigns. Usually, not many resources and programs leave the city of Boston. Therefore, being included in this statewide campaign was of tremendous help for our community. Now we can only hope this opens the doors to other statewide campaigns where our community can once again be included."