

OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE

George Hernandez



When an executive's concern transcends the scope of his office, his work becomes a catalyst that transforms an entire community. George Hernández began advocating for children with developmental disabilities as a high school volunteer with the Association

for Retarded Citizens (ARC). Mr. Hernández maintained a focus on mental health issues throughout his career, beginning as an attorney in the public sector and the decades that have followed, culminating as President and Chief Executive Officer of University Health System in San Antonio, Texas.

His outstanding commitment to an innovative program developed by University Health System called "Carelink" has provided consistent medical care to thousands of mentally disabled citizens who have no insurance coverage. Consistent medical care combined with behavioral services is vital to mental health consumers many with diabetes, heart and respiratory problems.

George Hernández led the effort to integrate the primary health and mental health care of these individuals and has helped to eradicate stigmas that prevent their access to quality medical care due to their mental disabilities. Research has shown that mental health consumers who cannot access health care die at a much younger age for lack of health care. In line with this concept, George Hernandez instituted the University Health System' Medication Assistance Program that has provided access to affordable medications to thousands of mental health consumers.

George exudes an untiring and positive energy and leads by example. This has captured the attention of local, state and federal legislators as well as community and civic leaders and other industry leaders, compelling them to make vital changes in healthcare policy, insurance parity and innovation in service delivery for individuals with mental disabilities. He has devoted thousands of volunteer hours serving at the governor's behest on Texas Health and Human Services Commission (and the predecessor TDMHMR) and other statewide committees, with a profound benefit to consumers and their families.

George has the support of a loving wife, Adel, and grown children who understand the magnitude of his devotion to improving the quality of life of those most vulnerable who society sometimes discounts. His volunteer time spans thousands of hours in ensuring that community collaborations are in place to improve and enhance the efforts brought forth by all providers to benefit persons with disabilities.

His spirit of giving inspires others to leverage their resources for strategic partnerships and he continues to influence policies that will benefit consumers in their quality of life for many years to come.

Nominated by The Center for Health Care Services