

SISTER CECILIA B. ABHOLD AWARD

The Sister Cecilia B. Abhold Award was established in honor of Health Outreach Partners' founding Executive Director, who pioneered and advocated for the importance of outreach for serving our most vulnerable and marginalized community members. Health Outreach Partners presents this award to organizations that exemplify Sister Cecilia's passion and dedication to their communities by utilizing comprehensive and innovative outreach strategies to facilitate access to care.



La Maestra Community Health Centers, San Diego, CA

La Maestra (“the teacher” in Spanish) provides culturally and linguistically competent healthcare, education, and support services to patients who are underserved, low-income, uninsured or underinsured, and culturally and ethnically diverse. La Maestra’s patients include immigrants, refugees, homeless persons, people in recovery, and many others with complex health and social needs.

La Maestra staff members speak 28 languages and dialects. Culturally sensitive health education and outreach services – as well as enabling and social services such as interpretation, transportation, and assistance applying for healthcare coverage, nutrition assistance, utilities discounts and other assistance programs – are integrated into La Maestra’s **Circle of Care** to reduce barriers that prevent community residents from accessing vital services.

From its inception in 1990, La Maestra developed a role for "Medically Trained Cultural Liaisons" (MTCL). These staff members are recruited from the populations served and work as medical assistants, billers, referral staff, and in other positions. They are trained to provide interpretation and enhance cultural competency throughout all of the health center’s services. La Maestra also recruits peer *promotoras*, who bring resources to the community at housing complexes, parks, schools, grocery stores, senior centers, Laundromats, religious and community based organizations, and community events. MTCLs and *promotoras* live in the same housing complexes as populations served and provide valuable, ongoing input to the organization from Latino, Somali, South Sudanese, Chaldean, Vietnamese, Laotian, Karen, Burmese and other diverse residents.

Celebrating its 25th year of eliminating barriers to improve access to health and wellbeing for underserved populations in San Diego, La Maestra’s integration of cultural and linguistic competency into every aspect of health care and education is core to achieving its mission.