

PRESS RELEASE

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**UNPRECEDENTED FEDERAL GRANT TO BENEFIT WEBB COUNTY AND SOUTH TEXAS PRESENTED TO METHODIST
HEALTHCARE MINISTRIES OF SOUTH TEXAS, INC.**

Check Presentation Marks Official Launch of Collaborative Project

Laredo, Texas—Today U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar ushered in an early Christmas for South Texas healthcare providers and advocates alike during a special ceremonial check presentation at First United Methodist Church. The check delivered by Cuellar to Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. (MHM) marked the official launch of a collaborative project supported by an unprecedented federal investment by The Social Innovation Fund.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a key White House initiative and program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), awarded \$10 million in investments to MHM to support its 'Sí Texas: Social Innovation for a Healthy South Texas' Project. The grant to MHM marks the first time SIF has selected a faith-based organization to receive funding since its inception, and is one of the largest grants made to the seven organizations selected to receive funds in 2014.

The objective of the Sí Texas Project is to stimulate improvements in behavioral health and chronic disease in South Texas, and to highlight integrated behavioral health models that are effectively improving health outcomes in communities with high rates of poverty, depression, diabetes, obesity and associated risk factors.

"Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas worked with my office to secure Texas' first Social Innovation Fund Grant from the Corporation for National Community Service," said Congressman Cuellar. "This federal investment will greatly improve the health of the people of South Texas, especially border communities that are at the forefront of the nation's health challenges. The Texas border region has some of the highest uninsured rates in the country and is disproportionately affected by chronic and communicable diseases. This project will greatly help to improve the health of our citizens."

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During the presentation, Kevin C. Moriarty, president and chief executive officer at Methodist Healthcare Ministries explained how the SIF funds complement MHM's previous and ongoing efforts in South Texas. "We have been investing in programs and services that have sought to address the remarkable healthcare needs in Laredo to the tune of \$12.6 million for over a decade--not including the programs and services we offer locally through our Wesley Nurse and Church Based Counseling programs," said Moriarty.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries is currently the largest private funding source for community healthcare services in South Texas. The mission of the organization includes one-half ownership of the Methodist Healthcare System based in San Antonio, which provides revenue to MHM for its programs and services that span across 74 counties in South Texas.

During the announcement, Moriarty emphasized how the additional investment from The Social Innovation Fund will strengthen MHM's regional collaborative strategies and allow the organization to leverage critical resources for agencies that are providing services in an area of tremendous need. "The support from Congressman Cuellar as well as our faith-leaders, business community, and local philanthropies will be vital to ensuring the resources are available to support these efforts now, and cast a bright light on the innovations taking place right here in South Texas to address this problem nationwide well into the future," said Moriarty.

Sister Maria Luisa Vera of Mercy Ministries of Laredo, who emphasized the great need the funds would help to address in Webb County, elaborated on the opportunity the investment will provide local providers. "This is truly an investment and not a handout; Laredo is growing into a vibrant community where people are engaged; are creating partnerships for better delivery of services; and want to increasingly participate in building a healthier and stronger place to live."

Bishop James E. Dorff of the Southwest Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church was also on hand to celebrate the role MHM will play as the first-ever faith-based organization to receive funds from SIF. "I am so pleased to welcome all the partners involved in this effort, in this particular setting—a place of spiritual healing—to celebrate and launch such a critical initiative. This is a pivotal moment for those who provide care and those who are in need; it represents access—something that is easy to take for granted if you are blessed to have insurance and live in an area where providers are plentiful. We know however, that is not the case in this community and especially in the areas this initiative will take shape. More importantly however, is that it is being led by an organization that leads by their faith and is present in the communities it serves. It is no surprise MHM was chosen as the first ever faith-based organization to receive this federal grant."

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The SIF investment will be matched by Methodist Healthcare Ministries to support the five-year project intended to stimulate improvements in behavioral health and chronic disease in South Texas, and to highlight integrated behavioral health models that are effectively improving health outcomes in communities with high rates of poverty, depression, obesity and associated risk factors. The Sí Texas Project will target 12 counties that span the U.S.-Mexico border in South Texas—to include Webb County—and involves grants made available to local agencies ranging from \$250,000 to \$2 million through an open, competitive application process.

According to the 2001-2003 National Comorbidity Survey Replication, 68 percent of adults with mental disorders also had at least one general medical disorder, and 29 percent of adults with medical disorders had a comorbid mental health condition. Similarly, in 2008 an article published in The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine reported the depression rate in South Texas among Hispanic patients with Type 2 diabetes was at 39 percent. The overarching goal of MHM’s Sí Texas Project is to improve rates of depression and diabetes over five years, including reductions in the proportion of adults who experience major depressive episodes and in the proportion of persons with diabetes with HbA1c levels greater than nine percent.

Using a Collective Impact framework, the Sí Texas Project will attempt to build an intricate network of cross-sector partnerships that will lead region-wide improvements in behavioral health and chronic disease. “We are proud to join this innovative new partnership and confident that Texas A&M International University (TAMIU) will bring the Sí Texas Project additional culturally-specific research and teaching strengths and experiences. We are eager to be a part of this collective and a catalyst for improved and sustainable health outcomes for our city and region,” says Dr. Ray M. Keck III, President, TAMIU.

Rebecca D. Brune, vice president of strategic planning and growth at MHM described the funding opportunity, and the community that has taken shape to support the initiative using the Collective Impact framework, as transformational. “There has traditionally been a minimal investment made in South Texas both by state and national foundations. However, we know from our work with our funded partners that there are innovative models that can effectively address these chronic illnesses and behavioral health needs. This project will allow us to evaluate these models and showcase those that are effectively meeting those needs, and ultimately, help to sustain and scale those efforts by attracting additional investments in this region.”

Methodist Healthcare Ministries is accepting applications for funding from organizations that provide

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services in the Project's 12-county area to improve and expand the delivery of integrated behavioral health services through the funding of tested, replicable IBH models that address physical and behavioral co-morbidities and transform treatment. Selected projects will build collaborative, cross-sector partnerships, ensuring community ownership and sustainability.

Agencies interested in applying for funds must submit a letter of interest by Friday, December 19, 2014. For more information about Methodist Healthcare Ministries' Sí Texas Project visit www.mhm.org/sitexas.

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About Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc. is a private, faith-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to providing medical, dental and health-related human services to low-income families and the uninsured in South Texas. The mission of the organization is "Serving Humanity to Honor God" by improving the physical, mental and spiritual health of those least served in the Southwest Texas Conference area of The United Methodist Church. The mission also includes MHM's one-half ownership of the Methodist Healthcare System, the largest healthcare system in South Texas, which creates a unique avenue to ensure that it continues to be a benefit to the community by providing quality care to all and charitable care when needed. For more information, visit www.mhm.org.

About The Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service and champions community solutions through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, Social Innovation Fund, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, and leads the President's national call to service initiative, United We Serve. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.