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Connecticut Hospital Association to Recognize Middlesex Hospital's Luis Mendez as a 2013 Healthcare Hero

WALLINGFORD – At its 95th Annual Meeting on June 25, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) will recognize Luis Mendez, Patient Care Technician, Middlesex Hospital, as a 2013 Healthcare Hero. He was nominated for this award by Jacquelyn Calamari, MSN, MS, NEA-BC, and Cliff O'Callahan, MD, PhD, FAAP.

Luis is well known within Middlesex Hospital as being a tireless worker and volunteer. He has great compassion for those who are suffering. But Luis has a heart that is also big enough for another community in great need—that of the Sayaxche region in the northern jungle Petén region of Guatemala.

The Middlesex Hospital-Sayaxche Community Partnership extends the hospital's involvement in community health to the global community. The goal of the project is to establish a long-term, collaborative, mutually beneficial and ethically sound partnership between Middlesex Hospital and the Middletown community and the Petén region in Guatemala.

A few years ago, Luis accompanied Cliff O'Callahan, MD, PhD, to Guatemala. Luis immediately recognized a glaring need – one of the major causes of death among the population is trauma on the roads. Additionally, half of all children died on inter-hospital transports.

There are three systems with vehicles dedicated to transporting patients: the hospital-based ambulances for transferring patients to the regional hospital; the public health infrastructure with its ambulances for transporting, primarily, pregnant women with labor complications to Sayaxche Hospital from rural communities; and the volunteer "firemen" who respond to traffic accidents and other situations. None of the vehicles had equipment and none of the drivers and few of the firemen had any training in stabilization, transport medicine, or communications issues in the transport system.

Luis's background in healthcare and as an EMT for a local volunteer fire department came in handy. He immediately began to teach, equip, motivate, cajole, and lead these different system employees into a different way of thinking, responding, communicating, and caring for patients. And he has continued this work for years, returning to the Petén two to three times a year. He works overtime at Middlesex Hospital to generate the money for his flights, encourages others to become involved in the partnership, shares these experiences with groups in the community, and leads groups of hospital staff and students on visits.

CHA's Healthcare Heroes award was developed in 2002 to celebrate the invaluable contributions of healthcare workers, both to their field and to the community at large. Now in its 12th year, the presentation of the Healthcare Heroes awards has become a highlight of CHA's Annual Meeting.

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About CHA
The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut's hospitals since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut's hospitals on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, community health, diversity, and hospital reimbursement.