The Colorado Health Foundation™

Sundari Kraft Recognized for the 2017 Dr. Virgilio Licona Community Health Leadership Award

KEYSTONE, CO – Sundari Kraft was recently honored with the 2017 Dr. Virgilio Licona Health Leadership Award during the Foundation's Colorado Health Symposium. This annual award program seeks to honor Coloradans who are finding innovative and effective strategies to overcoming community health barriers across the state. A grassroots leader, Kraft was recognized for her work in elevating community voices across the state to bring health in reach for all Coloradans.

As the founder of Sustainable Food Denver and the co-chair of the Denver Sustainable Food Policy Council, Kraft successfully led a grassroots movement to pass local policies that made healthy food more accessible and affordable. Key achievements were the food-producing policy that allows Denver residents to keep up to eight ducks or chickens and up to two dwarf goats, and the Denver residential sales ordinance that allows small-scale residential preparation and food sales without food licensing. These two landmark policies are helping Colorado families live healthier lives by increasing options for fresh and healthy foods.

Kraft also founded one of Denver's first multi-plot urban farms and received the Mayor's Design Award for her work engaging community members and encouraging families to convert unused yard space into productive gardens. She continues to engage with local Colorado farmers to support the passage of science-based agriculture policy, important to the local farming communities

across the state. Local farming allows for Colorado to have a thriving local food movement, continues Colorado's agriculture heritage and provide access to healthy food at affordable prices.

Kraft has also played a critical role in efforts around childhood vaccination in Colorado through amplifying voices of caregivers and highlighting the needs of families who especially rely on the data due to specific medical issues. She was instrumental in the passage of House Bill (HB) 14-1288 to address Colorado's high rate of personal belief exemptions for school required vaccines. Kraft made key recommendations to strengthen Colorado's vaccine policy in order to empower caregivers to make informed decisions about vaccinations and where to enroll their children using immunization data.

Inspired by the public policy process, she has dedicated herself full-time to policy work and grassroots engagement and has recently launched Colorado Parents for Vaccinated Communities, an ongoing effort to empower caregivers to speak up for pro-science public health policies.

"The journey that Sundari has experienced as an advocate is a most important story for all of us to be inspired by. A gifted consensus builder and grassroots organizer, Sundari has mobilized Colorado communities – from busy families to rural farmers – to speak up about health policies that matter to them most," said Foundation President and CEO Karen McNeil-Miller. "Her passion, leadership and commitment to serving her community – and those with the highest needs – is bringing health in reach for all Coloradans."

Kraft and her family joined the Foundation's Board, staff and fellow Symposium attendees for the award ceremony on Thursday, Aug. 3. Along with the award, the Foundation will make a $20,000 donation to a Colorado-based nonprofit of Kraft's choice.

“Receiving the Dr. Virgilio Licona Community Health Leadership award is truly an honor,” said Sundari Kraft. “Through my work in the local food movement and childhood immunizations, I hope to continue mobilizing and activating fellow Coloradans. It is vital that we continue to engage in informed conversations with policymakers and work together to address barriers to health and drive policy changes that will ensure our children and our communities thrive.”

The award program is named after Dr. Virgilio Licona, who passed in 2016. Dr. Licona was a physician and health advocate who worked to activate the voices of vulnerable communities. In his role as a health leader, he brought a critical voice to some of the most important conversations and decisions related to how all Coloradans can live healthy lives. Learn more about the Dr. Virgilio Licona Community Health Leadership Award.

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