



Beka Warren Receives Award for Championing Health Equity for Northwestern Coloradans

DENVER, CO – The Colorado Health Foundation last week announced Rebecca “Beka” Warren as the recipient of the [2019 Dr. Virgilio Licona Community Health Leadership Award](#). Named after Dr. Licona, a nationally recognized social justice and community health advocate, this award program seeks to honor on-the-ground leaders who are overcoming critical health barriers and bringing health in reach for Coloradans with the greatest needs.

Beka has served in a variety of impactful roles through the span of her career beginning as a registered nurse at Valley View Hospital in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. She has since held positions as the vice president of quality at Memorial Regional Health in Craig, Colorado, deputy coroner for Moffat County and technician for the Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank, among others. Most recently, she served as the executive director of Open Heart Advocates, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting high-need individuals and families who’ve experienced sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, teen dating violence, human trafficking and other forms of trauma or crime.

As executive director of Open Heart Advocates, Beka led efforts to improve its services and expand its involvement in community to better reach clients’ culturally relevant needs and uphold a sense of community. Services include a 24-hour hotline, on-scene response, transportation, safe shelter for up to 45 days, safety planning, protection order assistance, judicial advocacy, victims' rights

notifications, and victims' compensation referrals under the following programs: Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault, Latina Outreach, Child and Family, Special Outreach and Crime Victim. In this role, she fought diligently for the best interests of communities in the region – including 40% of Advocates' clients who identify as Latino. In addition to its programs and direct services, Advocates helps to organize, participate in and promote various community events that increase awareness of trauma-related issues and encourages support for the organization's mission, with the ultimate goal of spurring social change to curtail acts of violence against individuals in the community.

During her tenure as vice president of quality at Memorial Regional Health (MRH), Beka oversaw corporate compliance, health care quality, hospital and patient risk, patient care planning and discharges, rehabilitation services, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, internal auditing and treatment incidents. Beka's special projects largely centered on supporting the most voiceless individuals and families of Northwestern Colorado's many small communities. She played an essential role in guiding MRH's efforts to implement collaborative projects related to behavioral health – working closely with local leaders to address the region's struggles with mental health and substance use issues. In addition, she has directed MRH's recent partnership with the Moffat County Sheriff's Office that provides detainees with basic health care services. This project therefore aims to give all people the help they need to stay out of the emergency room for mental health and substance abuse issues, thereby working to reduce stigma and promote a more proactive mentality around seeking behavioral health treatment.

Currently, Beka is working with Moffat County commissioners, local law enforcement and other community members on a task force she spearheaded to address the opioid and substance abuse epidemic. She has also partnered with local community members to form a suicide prevention team for adults at risk.

“This award program seeks to honor champions for health and health equity. Beka’s lifelong efforts to bring health in reach for Coloradans is a true testament of Dr. Licona’s legacy and what this award program stands for,” said Foundation President and CEO Karen McNeil-Miller. “Her unrelenting commitment to the people of Northwestern Colorado has created health opportunities for those most in need, and her legacy is withstanding.”

Beka joined the Foundation’s Board, staff and fellow Symposium attendees for the award ceremony last week at the Colorado Health Symposium. In addition to receiving the award, the Foundation has pledged to make a \$20,000 donation to a Colorado-based nonprofit of Beka’s choice.

“I am beyond grateful to receive this award and to be recognized alongside individuals like the late Dr. Licona whose contributions have left Colorado a more equitable and healthier place to live,” said 2019 Dr. Virgilio Licona Community Health Leadership Award program winner. “It is my duty, my responsibility and my honor to serve the people of Colorado – especially those who go unheard – and to champion the positive changes we wish to see in our communities.”

Learn more about [the community health leadership award program](#), named after Dr. Virgilio Licona, who passed in 2016. Dr. Licona was a physician and health advocate. In his role as a health leader, he brought a critical voice to some of the most important conversations and decisions related to helping all Coloradans live healthy lives.

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POST DATE

Jul 31, 2019