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Molina honored with community award

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Recognized for years of work on inclusion and belonging

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Gunnison Valley's first-ever "Community Champion" has been selected. Yazmin Molina, Gunnison Health and Human Services multicultural resource coordinator, has been chosen as the inaugural recipient of the award, given to those who support inclusion and belonging across the valley.

"We're trying to recognize people who make the community a more welcoming place where everybody belongs," said Tina McGuinness, executive director of Gunnison Valley Mentors. Mentors nominated Molina. "It can be anybody for lots of different reasons ... It doesn't necessarily have to be somebody who's welcoming just to immigrant communities, but somebody who is welcoming to LGBTQ+ kiddos or kiddos who are new to town."



Over a year ago, the Gunnison County Community Health Coalition determined several community-wide focuses to strengthen health and wellness for everyone. One of those priorities was “welcoming and belonging” for immigrants and youth. A working group — composed of representatives from the City of Gunnison, the county, Mentors, Gunnison County 4-H, Western Colorado University and the Coldharbour Institute — generated an idea to nominate community members who demonstrate that stated priority.

Molina works on the county multicultural resource team, which also includes two Health Navigators. The team is tasked with identifying, and later filling, resource or care gaps for the immigrant and Spanish-speaking community.

“I moved here when I was 7 as an immigrant. I know firsthand what it’s like to be in our community and be an immigrant,” Molina said. “I saw my

parents struggle, other family members and friends in the Gunnison Valley also struggled. That’s my motivation, to be able to make it easier for our community members, to have someone that they trust in to come in and work with us.”

For example, in-person interpreting was a gap when Molina started with the county back in 2020, she said. Just last year, her team worked with GVH to get translators for the hospital. The team connected GVH with a professional interpreting company to hire community members who completed medical interpreting training. In May of this year, the team worked with a Denver-based company to help residents understand how to get their driver’s license, even including the option for Spanish-speakers to take the written test in real time. (See related story on B14.)

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