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La Maestra Improves Access to Healthy Food for 1,525 Underserved Latinos *Participants Engage in National Program to Address Food Insecurity and Access to Health*

SAN DIEGO, CA – La Maestra Community Health Centers (LMCHC), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) and a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) has made significant progress towards reaching its goal of assisting 3,000 low-income Latinos to enroll in the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This goal is part of an 18-month grant funded by the [National Council of La Raza](#) (NCLR). The program known as *Comprando Rico y Sano*, is a national initiative developed and managed by NCLR and supported by Walmart Foundation and General Mills, Inc.

La Maestra is one of 25 community-based organizations across the United States awarded funding for *Comprando Rico y Sano*. The program aims to increase Latino awareness of the importance of healthy shopping strategies, increase knowledge of cost-saving measures when shopping, and enroll eligible Latinos into SNAP, a federal nutrition assistance program offered to eligible, low-income individuals and families. Delia Pompa, Senior Vice President of Programs, NCLR, said, “NCLR is delighted to be working with La Maestra on this nutrition and hunger reduction program. Their good work helps low-income Latinos in San Diego learn about resources available to them so they will not go hungry. Nearly one-third of Latinos report that they do not have enough to eat. Programs like *Comprando Rico y Sano* that partner with local community groups are vital to changing this dynamic and improving the health of Latinos.”

To date, La Maestra has enrolled 1,525 low-income individuals, and the organization is on-target to exceed the program's goal of 3,000 by year-end. Alma Robles Duran, La Maestra Programs Director said, “*Comprando Rico y Sano* allows us to help struggling families obtain nutritious food so that they will not go hungry. We inspire participants to find healthy food options in their community and make meals with less than \$5.” Robles continues, “I have had so many women tell me this program has changed their lives for the better.” In the next 9-months, La Maestra plans to enroll more individuals and families into the program in an effort to improve health through healthy food choices, and by addressing negative health trends in the community such as childhood obesity and diabetes in City Heights, which is a known food desert.

A food desert is an area where you are more likely to find a Twinkie than a tomato — where obtaining healthy food is difficult due to access issues such as distance to supermarkets, lack of a personal vehicle, or lower socioeconomic status. In the program service area, the population is majority Hispanic with 47 percent identifying as Latino/as. According to data from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic population is almost three times higher than the national estimate of 16 percent. In addition, 79 percent of patients served were living at or below the federal poverty level (FPL), which is \$24,250 for a family of four.

Zara Marselian, Chief Executive Officer at La Maestra said, “NCLR is truly committed to improving health and wellness for underserved populations. This funding has allowed us to make a measurable impact on the community. We look forward to continuing this work.”

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La Maestra Community Health Centers (LMCHC) is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3), Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) with four medical clinics, eight dental clinics, four school-based sites, and one mobile medical unit in central, east and south San Diego County, California.

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