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First Lady of El Salvador Tours FamilySource Center, Learns How Program Strengthens Families and Raises Education and Income Levels in Low-Income Neighborhoods

(Los Angeles, January 31, 2012) Dr. Vanda Guiomar Pignato, First Lady of El Salvador, an attorney and dedicated human rights advocate toured one of the City's 21 FamilySource Centers to learn more about how Los Angeles is helping low income families become more self-sufficient. As the Secretary of Social Inclusion, Dr. Pignato oversees the formulation of public policy that ensures the rights of often overlooked groups in her country such as women, children, elderly and those with disabilities. To that end she has initiated programs that consolidate services for marginalized women and families.

"If a woman is happy, the family is happy," said Dr. Pignato as she toured the FamilySource Center, run by City Center Neighborhood Partners (CCNP) and administered by the Los Angeles Community Development Department (CDD).

FamilySource Centers, which are part of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's social inclusion initiative, deliver a set of core services through partnerships with a diverse group of agencies. The core services include multi-benefit screening, computer and financial literacy, parenting classes, information and referral, adult education, mentoring, tutoring and recreation for youth.



(l-r) CDD's Abigail Marquez, Dr. Paule Cruz Takash, President, Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, First Lady Pignato and Veronica Olmos, Executive Director City Center Neighborhood Partners (CCNP) tour the FamilySource Center



Dr. Pignato, seen here with Deputy Mayor Larry Frank, wants the City of Los Angeles to support her inclusion initiatives.

The First Lady was especially interested in these programs and how they are delivered. In March 2011, under her leadership, the first Ciudad Mujer center was opened offering Salvadoran women a series of integrated services including dental health, maternal-child health, psychological services for victims of domestic violence, vocational orientation, legal services, and micro loans to support small businesses. Medical services for children under five are also provided. The goal is to open 7 centers throughout El Salvador that will offer the same package of programs.

“When my husband was campaigning for office, I began to see that women were only visible when politicians wanted their vote and after elections were over, they became invisible,” said Dr. Pignato. “I told my husband I wanted women to become more visible, this is why we are working to change the lives of invisible women and this is why we started Ciudad Mujer.”

During her visit to the FamilySource Center, Dr. Pignato was greeted by City of Los Angeles Deputy Mayor Larry Frank and CDD Assistant General Manager Robert Sainz. Los Angeles Human Relations Commission President Dr. Paule Cruz Takash, who met the Dr. Pignato during a conference and invited her to Los Angeles to tour a FSC, was delighted to welcome the First Lady and walk through the Center with her.

In addition to the tour, Dr. Pignato was able to meet with local Salvadoran and Latina Women Leaders and speak about the benefits and challenges she has experienced in opening Ciudad Mujer. She was also presented with a \$500 donation from the Central Neighborhood Partners FamilySource Center. The funds will go toward purchasing needed equipment for Ciudad Mujer.

Los Angeles and Southern California is home to the largest number of Salvadorans in the United States.



CDD Assistant General Manager Robert Sainz spoke to the First Lady about the programs in the 21 FamilySource Centers.

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