400 community health workers attend conference, launch of new association

WENATCHEE—The fifth annual Community Health Worker Conference concluded in Wenatchee today, where more than 400 community health workers attended 40 learning sessions and training workshops. Visit the Department of Health on Facebook and Twitter for updates and photos from the conference.

As trusted community members, community health workers help reduce barriers to ensure all people are able to get healthy and stay healthy. Community health workers—a term which encompasses community health representatives, promotoras, peer counselors, lay leaders, health educators, patient navigators, care coordinators, community connectors and more—are connectors to needed resources, helping individuals and families navigate the health care system.

Research shows community health workers can improve health outcomes and achieve significant cost savings, particularly when it comes to chronic disease treatment and prevention.

The conference also featured the announcement of the new Washington State Community Health Worker Association, which will serve as a network and resource to support community health workers across the state.

“The Washington State Community Health Worker Association will help strengthen and sustain the growing number of community health workers across Washington,” said Lacy Fehrenbach, assistant secretary for prevention and community health at the Department of Health. “This is great news for a workforce truly at the forefront of efforts to reduce health inequities and ensure health care delivery is tailored to meet community needs.”

Washington joins a growing list of states with similar associations, including Oregon and California.
“This is an amazing opportunity to bring together all the players in the community health worker community and develop a set of standards that unify our voice at the statewide level,” said Lisa Gonzalez of the Washington State Community Health Worker Association Transitional Leadership Team. “This is the beginning of something great!”

Community health workers and their allies can get involved in the association or find more information by contacting chwsofwa@gmail.com.

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