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ZIKA AWARENESS DAY IN HOUSTON

HOUSTON, TEXAS — Dia de la Mujer Latina, Univision Houston, and City of Houston joined forces to raise awareness about the Zika virus on June 23rd with a focus on prevention at its Fiesta de Salud event in Magnolia Multiservice Center, 7037 Capitol Street, Houston. Mayor Sylvester Turner has issued a Proclamation stating June 23, 2016 as Zika Awareness Day for the City of Houston.

Zika virus is a disease spread to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have concluded, after careful review of existing evidence, that Zika virus is a cause of microcephaly and other severe fetal brain defects. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Yet there are many unknowns, which may result in more rumors.

According to Venus Ginés, President and Founder of Dia de la Mujer Latina (DML), *“the majority of our calls are related to myths and rumors about ZIKA and it is important to engage grassroots organizations and especially Promotores/Community Health Workers to deliver the facts about ZIKA in a culturally relevant manner.”*

The City of Houston Health Department, through the Office of Surveillance and Public Health Preparedness (OSPHP) led by Dr. Raouf Arafat, have been preparing to combat the threat of Zika virus to Houston. The OSPHP conducts ongoing surveillance and laboratory testing for the virus, while collaborating with agencies, such as DML, Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services, community partners, and medical providers to raise awareness and conduct outreach.

Dr. Arafat stresses the importance for “communities to work with medical providers, community organizations, and others to protect Houston from the Zika virus. We have worked across City of Houston departments and with partner organizations, such as DML, but the most important partner is the community.”

Dia de la Mujer Latina y Su Familia® Fiesta de Salud is DML’s signature program, developed in 1997 as a community specific grassroots program, serving more than 104,000 folks in 40 major cities, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic and soon Mexico, in an effort to motivate, inform, navigate and educate our vulnerable populations in a culturally and linguistically proficient manner via its dynamic team of Promotores/Community Health Workers.

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