Diana Jimenez, Deputy Director of the CalWORKS Employment Services, and Senator Bill Monning, who named her the 17th Senate District 2019 Woman of the Year.

Jimenez Named Senate District Woman of the Year

She says it came as a complete surprise, but those who know Diana Jimenez aren’t surprised at all.

Senator Bill Monning (D-Carmel) has named Diana Jimenez as the 17th Senate District’s 2019 “Woman of the Year.” Monning honored Jimenez during a special ceremony in the California State Senate Monday, part of the California Legislative Women’s Caucus annual tribute to outstanding California women during Women’s History Month.
For more than 20 years, Ms. Jimenez has been a dedicated public servant with the Monterey County Department of Social Services," said Senator Monning during the ceremony. “She is a compassionate leader who has helped transform the lives of families in need, not only through her work, but through her volunteer work on numerous boards, committees and commissions.”

More than 17 commissions over the years explains Jimenez, her way of giving back and helping others.

“I don’t forget where I came from; I want to be a good role model for my children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews,” she says.

What Jimenez is referring to is growing up as a field laborer and packing shed worker alongside her parents and siblings. She dropped out of high school at age 15 to help her parents make ends meet. Her work today is inspired by her experience of witnessing the effects of poverty first hand. She is a graduate of Hartnell College and California State University, Monterey Bay. She started as an eligibility worker in the Department of Social Services and is now the CalWORKs Employment Services Deputy Director.

Jimenez says she has met and worked with Senator Monning over the years and is overwhelmed that he would select her as the district’s Woman of the Year.

“To be honest, I wasn’t quite sure what this meant, so I went to the ceremony at the Capitol and saw the caliber of the other honorees from around the state and heard their stories. I was so humbled to be there and honored that Senator Monning selected me to represent his district.”

Jimenez’s granddaughters were on hand to see their grandmother celebrated by the Legislative Women’s Caucus and the California State Senate. Congratulations, Diana!

Celebration of Services a Success

Did you know that one in two Monterey County residents seeks help from Social Services? The department depends on its collaborations with partner agencies to meet those needs.

Monterey County Administrative Office
Each year, the CalWORKs Employment Services (CWES) division hosts a Celebration of Services event to recognize the innovative, collective impact and creative ways partner agencies come together to improve the lives of Monterey County families. This year’s event was held last month at Hartnell College and it was huge, with more than 100 people in attendance.

Marlene Bush, Management Analyst II with CWES, wrote about the event to share with the CAO Newsletter and put together photos featuring the many partner agencies.

“Each partner shared their services, stories, and customer testimonials, including CWES. One of our customers allowed us to share her inspirational and humbling story.”
Her name is Marissa. Both of her parents were incarcerated by the time she was 9 years old, which left her living from couch to couch at the homes of family and friends while dragging with her several trash bags full of her belongings.

At an early age she married into an extremely abusive relationship and had three children. Never feeling like she deserved better, it took her having three children and recognizing what they were seeing to push her to make the choice to do better for herself. She wanted a better life for her children.

After connecting with CWES, Marissa received a multitude of information and services from CWES and its partner agencies to put her on the road to success. Now, Marissa is on track to graduate from Hartnell this spring with two AA degrees, one in sociology and the other in psychology. We will be seeing her again soon, but in a different capacity. She wants to apply for a position within the County, her goal is to become a social worker for Monterey County and eventually attend CSUMB to earn a bachelor’s degree.

This day and this event were filled with inspiration and hope. Without our partner agencies, these moments we celebrate would not be possible.”

-Marlene Bush, CWES
Ciclovia Gonzales Earning National Attention

There is more good news for Ciclovia Gonzales, which was a partnership between the City of Gonzales and the Health Department.

First, the Transportation Agency of Monterey awarded the healthy lifestyle event its 2018 Project Team Transportation Excellence Award. Now it is in line for a national prize.

Ciclovia Gonzales, which is just one part of health promotion measures the city has engaged in during the last few years, has been selected as a finalist for the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize.

The Robert Woods Johnson Foundation is the nation’s largest public health philanthropy. The prize is designed to recognize communities which bring partners together around a shared commitment to health, opportunity and equity.

The winners will be awarded $25,000.

There are 12 finalists. Last year, the foundation selected four of its finalists to receive awards.

The City of Gonzales submitted for the award and would earn the prize money if selected. Staff at the Health Department are thrilled with the news.

“Being a finalist for such a prestigious award shows the importance of these partnerships, working together to create healthy lifestyle events,” explains Carmen Gill-Hernandez, the Health Department’s Health in All Policies Manager, who was on the Ciclovia project team. She says the department is supporting more of these partnerships. “Another Ciclovia event, along with a comprehensive health education program, is in the works for next month, this time in King City.”