



National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit

NEWS RELEASE

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National Awards Program Recognizes Outstanding Efforts in Immunizations

Healthcare Providers improve access, knowledge and administration rates for vaccinations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Recognizing the value and extraordinary contributions of individuals and organizations towards improved vaccination rates within their communities during the past year, the [National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit](#) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020 Immunization Excellence Awards. The awards will be presented during an upcoming virtual session to be announced in June for the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit.

There are three categories of recognition being awarded this year: overall influenza season activities, “immunization neighborhood” adult immunization champion, and corporate campaign award. Nominees were evaluated based on the areas of impact, collaboration, originality, overcoming challenges, and opportunities.

Many exciting and innovative programs were nominated this year. The Summit applauds all nominees who are working towards improving the health of their communities.

Complete descriptions of the award winners will be within the Summit Awards booklet available in late May at: <https://www.izsummitpartners.org/content/uploads/2020/05/2020-naiis-awards-booklet.pdf>

The 2020 Immunization Excellence Award winners are as follows:

“Immunization Neighborhood” Adult Immunization Champion Award

National Winner: Fremont County Department of Public Health and Environment

Honorable Mention: Oregon Health and Science University

Laura Scott 2019-20 Outstanding Influenza Season Activities Award

National Winner: “Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine”

Honorable Mention Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center

Honorable Mention Carolyn Cook, RN

Corporate Campaign Award

National Winner: The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society

Honorable Mention: Genesis HealthCare

Summary About Award Winners

“Immunization Neighborhood” Adult Immunization Champions

National Winner

**Fremont County Department of Public Health and Environment
(Canon City, CO)**

In 2019, Fremont County Department of Public Health and Environment (FCDPHE) worked to improve the vaccination rates within their community by removing barriers to access and collaborating with local businesses to have the greatest reach and impact. In October, FCDPHE, in partnership with emergency preparedness, Pueblo Community College Nursing program, and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) hosted a free mass flu vaccination clinic open to the public. In all, over 300 participants received their flu vaccine at no cost to them or their insurance provider. In addition to the free mass flu vaccine clinic, FCDPHE participated in several travel clinics to eliminate the barrier of transportation for those who live in rural Fremont County. Clinics were open to the public, and hosted by local libraries, community centers or schools. Lastly, FCDPHE partnered with local businesses, public offices, and interested employers to host travel flu vaccine clinics on-site. They recognized the difficulty to schedule time outside of business hours to schedule an appointment for themselves and their families, so they partnered together to provide a clinic for the employee and their family. This not only improved overall vaccination rates, but proved to be a great employer wellness benefit and an opportunity to provide health education, schedule future vaccination clinics for other needs, and connect with those who live and work in their community. In total, FCDPHE provided 17 clinics, in addition to their normal clinics provided during regular business hours. In 2019, FCDPHE gave 1270 flu vaccines.

Honorable Mention

**Oregon Health and Science University
(Portland, OR)**

On May 6, 2019, Gov. Kate Brown signed Oregon House Bill 2220 into law, allowing dentists to prescribe and administer vaccines to patients of any age, starting in 2020. The law empowers dentists to help improve vaccination rates in Oregon, prevent the spread of disease, and further integrate oral health with physical and behavioral health, ultimately better serving patients and promoting public health. With its signing, Oregon became the first state in the United States to permit dentists to vaccinate patients, including young children, with many types of vaccines.

To help Oregon prepare to implement this new law, Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) School of Dentistry had its first-ever vaccination training on September 27, 2019. Over 100 third- and fourth-year dental students were trained. Following the training, the students put their new knowledge to use by vaccinating each other, dental faculty, and staff against Influenza. Over 150 students, faculty, and staff were vaccinated against the flu by dental students, marking the first time an Oregon dental institution administered vaccines and received training on vaccine science, administration, policies, and procedures.

The training developed for dental students is ongoing and will be done for each subsequent third-year class in order to build a cadre of trained dentists qualified to provide vaccines in the State of Oregon. In December 2019, the training was approved by the Oregon Board of Dentistry for all dentists in the state.

Corporate Campaign

National Winner

The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society (Sioux Falls, SD)

Adults age 65 and older are the primary population served in Good Samaritan Society rehabilitation and skilled care centers, assisted living, housing with services and affordable housing apartments, and through home- and community-based services. Spread geographically across 23 states and more than 260 locations, protecting older adults in the Society's care cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach; however, standardizing policy, promoting best-practices and providing education are steps that must be taken to establish a foundation for health and success.

Over several years, Good Samaritan Society built a system and structure to support a mandatory employee influenza vaccination policy. The multi-year plan allowed them to make adjustments to their approach so leaders and employees could be successful. In 2019 they introduced a policy that required the vaccination for all employees. The policy also aligned with the employee influenza approach taken by Sanford Health – a growing hospital system with whom the Society merged with effective Jan. 1, 2019. Sanford Health was a valuable partner throughout the transition to the new policy.

Education and communication were key to getting leaders and employees on board. Technology aided in communication, accountability and tracking. The employee flu shot tracker gave individuals or leaders an easy way to indicate if they had been vaccinated or if they were requesting a medical or religious exemption from the vaccine. Local and regional leaders could use the tracker to see how vaccination rates were improving as the Society approached the November 1, 2019, flu vaccine deadline. Additionally, reminders were sent from the tracker to managers. Through these methods and others, the Society achieved a 98% employee influenza vaccination rate. Approximately 1% of employees have an approved medical or religious exemption and mask when working near residents or clients. In year one of the new policy – extended to more than 19,000 employees – this was a big achievement.

Honorable Mention

Genesis HealthCare (Kennett Square, PA)

AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine in 2018 undertook a major advocacy effort to increase the rate of flu vaccination among the personnel of America's nursing homes, which lags significantly behind other healthcare sectors. As part of this effort, AMDA challenged its leadership council of nursing home organization chief medical officers (CMOs) to engage their nursing centers in improving the rates of flu vaccination among their personnel, both clinical and non-clinical. Genesis Healthcare took up the challenge. Genesis' Universal Influenza Vaccination policy states that all personnel who work in a patient/resident building or whose job requires them to routinely be in a building where patient/resident care is provided (including Corporate and Divisional staff) are immunized against influenza on an annual basis.

As a result of the vaccination policy, 82.1% of center-based employees (clinical and non-clinical) received influenza vaccination, and 18.7% of center-based employees (clinical and non-clinical) were educated on risk vs. benefit but not vaccinated. Other components of the Genesis vaccination policy include any staff person who declines for personal reasons is required to wear a mask during the flu season; vaccination offered at no charge to employees; and employees can earn "Living Well" points for receiving the influenza vaccination that are applied towards reducing the cost of health care benefits for the employee. Each year, the centers receive a different color sticker to place on the employee identification badges that provide a visual cue as to which employees have been vaccinated against the flu. Genesis' inter-professional team coordinates a company-wide influenza vaccination campaign for both patients/residents and employees, and monitors reports vaccination rates.

Laura Scott 2019-20 Outstanding Influenza Season Activities Award

National Winner

"Sawbones: A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine"

(Huntington, WV)

Since 2013, Dr. Sydnee McElroy (a family physician) and her husband Justin McElroy have produced weekly episodes of their one-of-a-kind podcast called "Sawbones, A Marital Tour of Misguided Medicine." Currently the world's most popular medical podcast, downloads of their shows average more than 250,000 per week. People in their twenties and thirties, an age group known to be undervaccinated, constitute a large share of the "Sawbones" audience.

Discussing a wide variety of interesting medical topics that attract listeners from across the agespan, their friendly engaging delivery achieves high regard from their audience for both authoritative science-based information and entertainment. Many listeners tell the McElroys that a main attraction of the show is they learn important health-focused information which they can share with friends. It is within that context that they are able to weave their favorite topic, vaccination, and especially influenza vaccination during flu season, year after year.

The "Sawbones" theme of "myth busting" aligns perfectly with describing how certain substitutes for vaccination are ineffective. They promote the general use of vaccines and have specifically discussed HPV and adenovirus but their main emphasis is influenza. Their support for flu vaccination includes promoting the use of community vaccinators. They recently described personal stories of getting vaccinated at their neighborhood pharmacy. One recent show asked listeners to send in their "reasons" for not having yet gotten their flu shots. They then produced an episode called "27 Reasons Why You Should Get a Flu Shot" in which they busted the 27 most common excuses submitted by "blowing them to smithereens."

These podcasts are particularly special because they are able to move positive messages about vaccination into a demographic that is undervaccinated against influenza. Their 2018 release of "The Sawbones Book" became a New York Times bestseller. All current and past productions of "Sawbones" are available online at www.maximumfun.org/podcast/sawbones.

Honorable Mention

Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center

(Waianae, HI)

The story of how the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (WCCHC) increased their employee influenza vaccination from 26% to over 95% in just two years holds valuable lessons for other community health centers. WCCHC is a midsize Federally Qualified Health Center meeting the needs of underserved communities in Oahu, Hawaii. In 2016, only 26% of its 700 dedicated staff received their annual flu shot, among the lowest in the state. Recognizing the risk this posed to patients and the community, WCCHC embarked on a two-year initiative to drastically improve its HCP vaccination rate. It set an ambitious goal of reaching 90% without the benefit of any additional resources and without negatively affecting employee satisfaction – a tall order!

The initiative was a huge success by achieving over 95% vaccination rate; placing it among the top 3 health facilities in Hawaii. WCCHC attributes its success to a unique program that leveraged internal coordination, targeted communications, and cross-departmental collaboration. The decision to take this approach was informed by toolkits published by the CDC and NAIIS, and best practices from the field of international development where nonprofits are continuously refining strategies for implementing vaccination programs in low resource settings.

Reaching a 95% flu vaccination rate not only protects individual staff from influenza but also contributes to herd immunity for vulnerable patients and community members. Additionally, the approach taken by this initiative increased clinical education of front-line health workers while strengthening interdepartmental collaboration and employer-employee trust. Potentially the most valuable output, however, is a model of how other community health centers might replicate the success of WCCHC and increase their own HCP vaccination rates.

Honorable Mention

Carolyn Cook, RN (Tacoma, WA)

“Flu kills more people per year than any other vaccine-preventable disease.” If one phrase embodies Carolyn Cook’s driving force, it would be that. She is one of the most well-known and highly regarded immunization advocate in Pierce County, Washington. Her leadership and innovation regarding flu vaccination coverage has earned her that respect. Prior to working as a public health nurse at the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, she was the Mary Bridge Immunizations nurse for 17 years. She has channeled that knowledge and experience from working with countless patients and families into program planning to improve flu immunization rates across the county, for all residents 6 months and older. Her list of flu vaccine projects and advocacy lengthens every year to ensure that all eligible residents have access to flu vaccine.

Carolyn’s most notable achievements was the creation and ongoing success of the School Located Influenza Vaccination (SLIV) Clinics. For over a decade, she has fostered collaboration between the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, the Medical Reserve Corp, local universities, and local school districts to go into some of the highest need schools in the county and provide free influenza vaccination. This past year alone, over 2200 children were immunized against the flu.

Carolyn is one of the founding members of the Pierce County Infant Immunization Initiative (I3). This collaborative of immunization nurses works to address barriers to immunization in the community and has expanded to include participation from Madigan Army Medical Center. Additionally, she hosts an annual meeting of the county’s school nurse leads and the Mary Bridge Mobile Immunization Clinic to identify needs of the community. She also founded the Private Provider Project, which connects private providers with their local school districts.

Her work from the population down to the individual level is inspiring, from answering questions of vaccine hesitant parents, to lecturing university students on the importance of flu vaccine, to addressing barriers to flu vaccines through a countywide project. Carolyn is a true influenza immunization champion.

About the National Adult & Influenza Immunization Summit

The National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit, started in the year 2000 (as the National Influenza Vaccine Summit), is an action-oriented entity with more than 700 members who represent more than 130 public and private organizations with an interest in addressing and resolving influenza and adult vaccine issues and improving vaccination rates for vaccines recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Visit the Summit’s website at izsummitpartners.org

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