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CRIMINAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office Victims Unit Director Rosie Martinez named Young Hearts Matter Advocate of Year by the Texas Council on Family Violence

EDINBURG – Hidalgo County District Attorney Ricardo Rodriguez Jr. is proud to announce that Rosie Martinez Victims Unit Director was awarded the Young Hearts Matter Advocate of the Year by the Texas Council on Family Violence for her efforts in teen dating violence prevention.

This award is the most recent of the many awards that Rodriguez and the District Attorney's Office have received since the Victims Unit was created in 2015 and is indicative of the DA office's efforts to serve and support crime victims. Rodriguez, who has championed victims' rights since taking office in 2015, has supported and participated in all the prevention efforts of the Victim Unit staff.

"Our office will continue to provide the best services to victims of crimes, and being recognized and noticed at the national and state level is demonstrative of the strong commitment from our office to work in close partnership and collaborate with crime victim agencies not only in our county, but also on the state and national levels," said Rodriguez.

Each February, the Texas Council on Family Violence promotes National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month through a statewide campaign, *Young Hearts Matter*. It takes each of us – individuals, schools, and community organizations to build violence-free schools in Texas. During the preteen and teen years, young people are learning skills they need to form positive relationships with others. This is an ideal time to promote healthy relationships and prevent patterns of dating violence that can last into adulthood. Prevention is essential and needed to deter further dating violence.

The Texas Council on Family Violence named Martinez as the YHM Advocate of the year for her tireless prevention efforts and for leading this campaign across Hidalgo County and for her 18 years of providing services to victims of crime.

"It is important to inspire youths to create social movement but we must also encourage them to take action and become the leaders of the change they are trying to accomplish," Martinez said. "This award is not just for me! It is for Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez and the entire office for always supporting and participating in all of our prevention efforts; for our dedicated Victim Advocates that work hard every day to assist victims of crime; for all the Young Hearts Matter Ambassadors, for having the courage to stand against dating violence at a young age; for every educator and parent that has joined our cause to end teen dating violence; and for our elected officials who support our mission. This award is for every single person that has joined forces with us to educate youths on healthy relationships because Young Hearts Matter."

As part of the Young Hearts Matter Teen Dating Violence Prevention month the Hidalgo County District Attorney's office will be hosting several prevention events, including:

- A statewide press conference outside the Hidalgo County courthouse in collaboration with the Texas Council on Family Violence and pass a Proclamation by the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court to declare February as Young Hearts Matter Month at 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 20.
- A specialized Teen Dating Violence training in collaboration with the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley Social Work Department for the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, scheduled for Feb. 22.
- The Third Annual Young Hearts Matter 2K Walk with La Joya Independent School District, scheduled for Feb. 24.
- Presentations to students at La Joya ISD's Juarez Lincoln High School and at Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD's Memorial High School on Feb. 1 and 2.
- A youth rally at the Edinburg Christian Life Church, scheduled for Feb. 10.
- A collaboration with the Weslaco Police Department for a presentation at its YHM Self Defense Class for teens on Feb. 17, and at all YHM events hosted by partnering agencies of the Hidalgo County Family Violence Taskforce throughout the month of February.

For information on the YHM 2018 events please contact the HCDA Victims Unit at (956)292-7616.

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