



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Texas Council on Family Violence Observes February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month and Celebrates Hidalgo County's "Young Hearts Matter - Advocate of the Year" Rosie Martinez.

Rosie Martinez, of Edinburg, is motivating young people to be visible and vocal advocates for violence prevention and transforming culture.

Austin, TX (February 1, 2018) – Today, Young Hearts Matter, a campaign to bring awareness to teen dating abuse, presents the Advocate of the Year Award to recognize individuals from across Texas who inspire and lead efforts in their communities to promote healthy relationships in addition to demonstrating a passion for supporting young people in their efforts to bring awareness to dating violence.

Teen dating abuse happens in every school across Texas and the United States. In today's environment, with increasingly complicated communication dynamics, it is easier than ever for a dating partner to use various means to harass, control and abuse their partner. The Texas Council on Family Violence is working to make sure students are engaged, educated and empowered to know their rights and know when they are involved in healthy and unhealthy dating relationships.

"Texas lost 146 women to domestic violence in 2016. Eight of these victims were 19 or younger, with the youngest victim being 15. This is a 100% increase from our 2015 report." said Gloria A. Terry, CEO of the Texas Council on Family Violence. "We must turn the tide; the answer lies in giving rise to young leaders and equipping young people across the state for a path towards healthy relationships. Empowering young people to create mechanisms that allow change and elevate their leadership can help prevent harm in the future."

Rosie Martinez, Young Hearts Matter Advocate of the Year, is the Victims Unit Director in the Hidalgo County District Attorney's Office. This award recognizes an adult ally who partners with young people, is a leader for violence prevention in their community, and has made prevention programming more accessible because of their efforts.

Rosie Martinez, of Hidalgo County, has spearheaded a Young Hearts Matter movement in South Texas by creating opportunities and supporting the efforts of the young hearts of her community and beyond. Rosie has 18 years of experience in the field of victim's advocacy and led the development and implementation of a regional victims' assistance program to provide services to victims of family violence, sexual assault, child abuse, teen dating violence, stalking and human trafficking, as well as survivors of homicide victims in Hidalgo, Cameron, Willacy, Brooks and Starr Counties.

In addition to her vital role as the Victims Unit Director, Rosie has made mobilizing young people in the prevention of dating and domestic violence her passion. She has organized and conducted numerous prevention events throughout her career, and uses February – Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month - as platform to provide education to youth on the prevention of dating violence and how to promote healthy relationships among their peers. Rosie's commitment has influenced community leaders to pass proclamations speaking out against domestic and dating violence. She was recognized by TCFV as one of the "Most Influential Women in Texas" for her commitment and dedication to prevention work against domestic violence. Her work was also recognized by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) as the 2017 Honored Victim Advocate in the category of Pioneers in Advocacy. Rosie has taken TCFV's Young Hearts Matter Campaign and moved into action. Her passion for supporting young leaders to change culture is how we will continue to create a safer Texas.

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Texas Council on Family Violence is the only 501(c) 3 nonprofit coalition in Texas dedicated solely to creating safer communities and freedom from family violence. With a state-wide reach and direct local impact, TCFV, with the collective strength of more than 1300 members, shapes public policy, equips service providers, and initiates strategic prevention efforts. Visit us online at <http://www.tcfv.org/>

About Young Hearts Matter

Engaging youth and teens is a cornerstone of prevention work. Young Hearts Matter promotes and supports the work of young leaders alongside adult allies in creating a state where healthy relationships are the norm. The YHM toolkit offers resources for youth, school officials, community organizations, and many more. The YHM Activist of the Year, Advocate of the Year, and Texas Partner for Change awards recognize individuals who inspire and lead their communities to promote healthy relationships for young hearts in Texas.

