



## **Binational Health Week**

### ***16 Years Working for Your Health***

For sixteen years, Binational Health Week (BHW) has aimed to respond to, and raise awareness of the unique healthcare challenges Latinos living in the United States and Canada face. Since its inception in 2001 the Secretariats of Health and Foreign Affairs of Mexico, through the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, have led this effort in collaboration with the Health Initiative of the Americas (HIA), a program under the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. Over the years the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia have joined to expand the assistance to their communities in the U.S. and Canada.

Today, BHW has evolved into one of the largest mobilization efforts in the Americas to improve the health and well-being of the underserved Latino population. It encompasses an annual series of health promotion and health education activities that include workshops, health fairs, medical screenings, and services during the month of October. Due to collaboration efforts, BHW is able to pool resources and build networks between agencies and organizations working on Latino health issues and foster ongoing collaboration.

Throughout its history, BHW has served as a catalyst for coordinated and sustained cooperation among community organizations and government agencies of the U.S., Mexico and other Latin American countries. The idea behind binational collaboration is that improving the health of Latino immigrants not only benefits them, but also has a positive economic and social impact in the countries of origin and countries of destination. While BHW is only during the month of October, it is intended as a first step in a larger program of cooperation amongst Latin American countries and agencies in the U.S. to improve the health and well-being of immigrants and their families.

#### **Growth and Results**

BHW was established in 2001 and began as a small program between Mexico and the United States, with partners in only seven counties in California. Under the slogan “Aunque estés lejos, no estás solo” or “Even though you are far, you are not alone”, BHW coordinators and 4 Mexican consulates partnered to plan 98 events in 2001 throughout California.

Since then, BHW has expanded to 43 states in the United States, and three provinces in Canada. BHW has continued to gain momentum and with the leadership and coordination of 133 consulates of ten Latin-American countries, and the participation of approximately 4,000 agencies as well as 15,000 volunteers, BHW reaches and serves an average of 340,000 people each year. Moreover, over the course of fifteen years BHW has provided health education and preventive services to **over five million**

**people.** The majority of people of people at BHW events are low-income Latinos who many times have limited access to health services and lack health insurance in the U.S. Besides basic information, referrals, education sessions, conferences and sports events, the provision of free health services is an important component of BHW. These services are provided in collaboration with local physicians, community clinics, hospitals and medical schools, to insure follow up in case is needed. In 2015 alone, approximately 60,000 health services were given during BHW events. Health services and screenings offered at BHW vary according to year and region, and include: glucose screenings, cholesterol screenings, BMI, blood pressure screenings, dental check-ups, vision check-ups, mammograms, breast exams, PAP smears, vaccinations, among others.

For many Latinos BHW is the only opportunity they have to receive free health services. According to surveys administrated to participants at BHW events, 31% of them stated that it was the first time they ever received a health service in the United States.

### **Inaugural Event and Binational Policy Forum**

The Binational Policy Forum on Migration and Global Health is the launching event of Binational Health Week. The goal of the forum is to convene key stakeholders from the United States, Mexico, Canada, and Latin-American countries to discuss migrant health challenges and to explore unique opportunities to work collaboratively to improve the health and well-being of this population. Topics that are addressed include Chronic Diseases, Communicable Diseases, Access to Healthcare, Occupational Health, and Mental Health.

The location of the Policy Forum and BHW inaugural event alternates each year between Mexico and the U.S. Below is a list of where the event has been held in the past:

2001	Los Angeles, California	USA
2002	Morelia, Michoacan	Mexico
2003	Los Angeles, California	USA
2004	León, Guanajuato	Mexico
2005	Chicago, Illinois	USA
2006	Guadalajara, Jalisco	Mexico
2007	Los Angeles, California	USA
2008	Zacatecas, Zacatecas	Mexico
2009	Santa Fe, New Mexico	USA
2010	Guanajuato, Guanajuato	Mexico
2011	San Antonio, Texas	USA
2012	Oaxaca, Oaxaca	Mexico
2013	Washington, D.C.	USA
2014	San Luis Potosí, San Luis Potosi	Mexico
2015	San Francisco Bay Area, California	USA

***This year, the inaugural event of the XVI Binational Health Week and Binational Forum will take place on October 2016.***