



# Press Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Contact:

Lyda Vanegas  
Director of Communications and Public Relations  
[lvanegas@maryscenter.org](mailto:lvanegas@maryscenter.org)  
202-420-7051 (w) 202-607-6110 (c)

Hazel Meda  
Communications Associate  
[hmeda@maryscenter.org](mailto:hmeda@maryscenter.org)  
202-420-7008

## Mary's Center President & CEO Maria Gomez Featured in *The Hero Effect* Docu-Series

-- Episode Will Air on Feb. 11 at 10:00am EST on OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network --

**WASHINGTON, DC (Jan. 30 2017)** – Mary's Center's President and CEO Maria Gomez was selected by United Way Worldwide as one of 10 heroes to be featured in *The Hero Effect*, an uplifting docu-series produced by Dolphin Entertainment that tells the stories of ordinary individuals who are making extraordinary differences in their communities. The heroes featured in the series were identified in part through nominations from the 1,200 local United Ways across the country.

"Throughout my 35 years of working with communities at United Way, I've learned that the vast majority of people are eager to make the world a better place," said Brian Gallagher, President and CEO of United Way Worldwide. "The men and women featured in 'The Hero Effect' are our local heroes, stepping forward to make a difference in their communities. We're incredibly inspired by their work and excited to help share them and their efforts with the world."

The episode, co-hosted by Super Bowl and *Dancing with the Stars* champion Donald Driver and actress Emily Wilson, highlights Maria Gomez's commitment and years of tireless work since she founded Mary's Center to provide healthcare, education and social services in the DC Metropolitan area, and the organization's impact throughout its 28 years of services.

"I am humbled by this recognition, which I dedicate to my entire staff," said Maria Gomez, President & CEO of Mary's Center. "Mary's Center has more than 500 heroes who devote themselves every day to improving the lives of thousands of families. I am fortunate to have them guiding me and innovating every day to advance our mission and transform our delivery of care."

The episode, which follows months of detailed planning and one week of camera-action, interviews and Zumba dancing, captures touching moments including a surprise visit from several founding patients, and compelling testimonials of the Center’s staff and participants.

“Instinctively, we all believe that there are quiet heroes out in the world, helping others in meaningful ways,” said Bill O’Dowd, CEO, Dolphin Entertainment. “The Hero Effect’ hopes to create some noise around their efforts, in the hope of inspiring others to do the same. With the Oprah Winfrey Network and United Way, we have two strong partners who have built leading, recognizable brands on celebrating the power of the human spirit, and will help us to bang the drum for more heroes.”

*The Hero Effect* airs on the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN), a joint venture between Harpo, Inc. and Discovery Communications, on the second Saturday of every month at 10:00 am EST. The episode on “Mary’s Center” will be broadcast on February 11 at 10:00 am EST.

To learn more about *The Hero Effect*, visit [www.heroeffect.com](http://www.heroeffect.com)

###

#### **About Mary’s Center**

Founded in 1988, Mary’s Center is a Community Health Center that provides a model of care that including healthcare, educational and social services to more than 40,000 individuals from over 100 countries. Using a holistic, multipronged approach, Mary’s Center helps each participant access individualized services and find the path towards wellness, stable families, educational success and economic opportunities. For more information please visit us at [www.maryscenter.org](http://www.maryscenter.org) or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

#### **About United Way Worldwide**

United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in every community. Supported by 2.8 million volunteers, 9.8 million donors worldwide, and more than \$4.7 billion raised every year, United Way is the world’s largest privately-funded nonprofit. We’re engaged in nearly 1,800 communities across more than 40 countries and territories worldwide to create sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our communities. United Way partners include global, national and local businesses, nonprofits, government, civic and faith-based organizations, along with educators, labor leaders, health providers, senior citizens, students and more. For more information about United Way, please visit [UnitedWay.org](http://UnitedWay.org). Follow us on Twitter: @UnitedWay and #LiveUnited.

#### **About Dolphin Entertainment**

Founded in 1996, Dolphin is a world-class independent financier, distributor and producer of premium film, television and digital programming. Dolphin has produced and delivered original content to more than 300 million homes in 125 countries. Dolphin Entertainment is an Emmy-nominated leader in family, tween, teen and young-adult television programming. Dolphin Entertainment is known for creating hit properties such as Emmy-nominated *Zoey 101* (Nickelodeon’s highest-rated series), *Ned’s Declassified School Survival Guide*, and *What’s Up Warthogs* (Family Channel’s Canadian Screen Award nominated). The Dolphin Entertainment-produced family sitcom *Raising Expectations*, starring Molly Ringwald and Jason Priestley, premiered on Mother’s Day 2016, on Family Channel Canada.

#### **About OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network**

OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network is the first and only network named for, and inspired by, a single iconic leader. Oprah Winfrey’s heart and creative instincts inform the brand – and the magnetism of the channel. Winfrey provides leadership in programming and attracts superstar talent to join her in primetime, building a global community of like-minded viewers and leading that community to connect on social media and beyond. OWN is a singular destination on cable. Depth with edge. Heart. Star power. Connection. And endless possibilities. OWN is a joint venture between Harpo, Inc. and Discovery Communications. The network debuted on January 1, 2011. The venture also includes the award-winning digital platform [Oprah.com](http://Oprah.com). For more information, please visit [www.oprah.com/own](http://www.oprah.com/own) and <https://press.discovery.com/us/own/>.