



**Maria S. Gomez, R.N., M.P.H.
President and CEO**

Maria S. Gomez founded Mary's Center in 1988 in order to build better futures for District residents by providing quality health care, family literacy and social services to culturally diverse communities throughout the Washington metropolitan region.

Under Maria's leadership, Mary's Center has grown from an initial budget of \$250,000 serving 200 participants a year to an annual budget of \$20 million with more than 24,000 participants. The center has three sites in DC, one in Montgomery County and will open a new site in Prince George's County in early 2012.

Mary's Center advocacy efforts led by Maria were recognized by the National Council of la Raza (NCLR) in July 2011 with the *Affiliate of the Year Award*, the highest honor bestowed on an NCLR Affiliate in recognition of the exemplary work in serving the community and supporting NCLR's policy and programmatic initiatives. In February 2011 Maria was recognized as one of the 19 *Upstander* leaders in DC for serving as an inspiration to others by making a positive difference in their communities and around the world. In October 2011 Maria was awarded the Inaugural Diane Bernstein Children's Champion Award by DC Action for Children and the Health Champion Award by the National Minority Organ Tissue Transplant Education Program.

In the October 2010 edition, the *Washingtonian Magazine* named Maria as one of the 45 individuals who shaped Washington DC between 1965 and 2010. The magazine also acknowledged Mary's Center for its role as a "critical piece of the region's healthcare system."

Both current DC Mayor Vincent Gray and former DC Mayor Adrian Fenty recognized Maria's trajectory and experience in the healthcare arena by naming her to Co-chair with Peter Edelman the Health and Human Services Transition Team.

It was Maria's hard work and dedication that inspired the First Lady, Mrs. Michelle Obama, to choose Mary's Center as the site of her first official visit to a non-profit in February of 2009. Since then, Maria has strengthened her ties with the new administration and has become a frequent guest of the White House for both social and community related events. In May of 2010, Maria was one of the 200 guests invited to attend the State Dinner held in honor of the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderon and his wife, Margarita Zavala. In October 2010, the First Lady accepted Maria's invitation to be the Honorary Chair of Mary's Center's annual gala *Noche Tropical*.

Maria currently serves as a board member of the Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation, Share Our Strength, and United Medical Center. She is a member of the Congressional Latino Council.

Maria is the recipient of numerous awards, including the *Washington Post Award* for Excellence in Nonprofit Management, the *Washington Business Journal Minority Business Leader Award* and the *Washingtonian of the Year Award* as named by *Washingtonian Magazine*.

Prior to establishing Mary's Center, Maria worked in hospitals throughout the area from the emergency room to the neurosurgical unit. Later she transferred to the DC Department of Health as a public health nurse providing both primary care as well as home base care throughout every Ward in DC. She also worked with organizations such the Red Cross where she directed community education programming and disaster services throughout the country, as well as the DC Visiting Nurses Association.

Originally from Colombia, Maria immigrated with her mother at age 13 and attended the DC Public Schools. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Georgetown University and a Master's in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley.

Maria and Miachel Rexrode have been married for 19 years and have a 16 year old daughter, Amalia.