

News Release

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YWCA honors successful professional women in Coastal Bend *41th annual Y Women In Career Awards*

CORPUS CHRISTI — Recognizing successful professional women highlights their accomplishments. That’s why YWCA recognizes women who make significant impacts in their career field through the Y Women In Careers Award. **This year’s honorees will be recognized at the 41th Y Women In Careers Awards Event Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. .**

YWCA has honored 299 exceptional women in the Coastal Bend who stand out in their career fields through the Y Women In Careers Award. This professional award highlights accomplishments made by the honorees. This year's honorees are:

- **Kiwana Denson**, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Del Mar College;
- **Maria Emilia Martinez, PhD**, Associate Vice President of Student Access, Texas A&M University--Kingsville;
- **Annette Rodriguez**, Director of Public Health, City of Corpus Christi/ Nueces County Public Health District;
- **Judith E. Talavera**, President & Chief Operating Officer, AEP Texas.

YWCA President/CEO Nancy Wesson-Dodd said, “Recognizing these deserving women is a special privilege for YWCA, as well as fulfilling our mission of ‘Empowering Women.’ These honorees play crucial roles in our community. Y Women in Careers is a vital way to show young girls what women can accomplish, helping them to set goals for their own lives!” she added.

Support and sponsorships are available at www.ywcacc.org. For more information, contact 361-857-5661 X 102 or devywca@ywcacc.org. As one of YWCA’s major fundraisers, Y Women In Careers Event offers priceless support for YWCA programs and communicates the essential role YWCA plays in our community.

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Young Women In Careers

2021 Honorees



Kiwana Denson

*Director of Strategic Initiatives
Del Mar College*

Kiwana Denson is Director of Strategic Initiatives at Del Mar College. After earning her master of science in Adult and Technical education, she worked in several management positions. Ms. Denson joined Del Mar College in 2012 as corporate service coordinator. She has spearheaded key training programs in partnership with area industries that are helping advance Del Mar College. In her current position, Ms. Denson assists the executive vice president and chief operation officer by providing leadership and project management of the Strategic Initiatives.



*Maria Emilia
Martinez Ph.D.*

*Associate Vice President of Student
Access, Texas A&M University-
Kingsville*

Dr. Maria Emilia Martinez Earned her doctor of philosophy from New Mexico State University. She has 30 years leadership and operations experience, 16 of those in higher education. Dr. Martinez currently serves as associate vice president for student access at Texas A & M University Kingsville. In her current position, she provides leadership and oversight for the office of student access where she manages 13 federal, state and private programs with budgets just over \$22 million in federal funding. The programs serve 5,100 high school and college students across South Texas.



Annette Rodriguez

*Director of Public Health
City of Corpus Christi/Nueces*

Annette Rodriguez is the Director of Public Health for City of Corpus Christi/Nueces County Health Department. Ms. Rodriguez was hired by the City of Corpus Christi in 1988 as the Health Education Director for the Corpus Christi—Nueces County Public Health District. She was also the public information officer for the district handling all media communications. Ms. Rodriguez is a certified infection control practitioner and a trained epidemiologist, skills that serve her well as she leads our community through the COVID pandemic



Judith E. Talavera

*President & Chief Operating
Officer AEP Texas*

Judith E. Talavera is President & Chief Operating Officer of AEP Texas, the first woman to serve in this leadership position. She joined AEP as 2000 as manager of state governmental affairs, became director of regulatory services in 2008. She leads an organization of 1,000 plus team members that deliver electric service to over one million customers in south and west Texas. In 2017 after Hurricane Harvey devastated so many communities and over 200,000 AEP customer lost power, Ms. Talavera worked alongside over 5,600 employees to restore service as rapidly as possible.

Mission

YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

History of YWCA

As part of a global organization strengthened by diversity, YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism and empowering women. Locally, YWCA has been a stable presence in this community since 1946. YWCA offered housing and citizenship classes to young women; opened the first integrated pool in town; sponsored the first integrated high school dance; and helped Del Mar College become the first college below the Mason-Dixon Line to integrate.

Over 70 years later, YWCA still offers programs and services in direct response to current community needs. Strengthened by a rich service history, YWCA still constantly evolves to ensure programs are worthy and relevant. Our services change over time, while our efforts remain rooted in our mission. Whether empowering young girls to build bright futures through confidence, goal-setting, and healthy choices or putting health within reach for seniors to maintain or regain their independence, we change lives.

Each year, YWCA programs inspire 20,000 women, children, and families to reach for more; creating supportive environments, fostering diversity, changing lives through education, and empowering people to achieve lasting independence. With ongoing support of volunteers, donors and friends, YWCA continues to empower the Coastal Bend community.

WE ARE STRONG ALONE, FEARLESS TOGETHER!

History of the Y Women In Careers Awards

The Y Women In Careers Award recognizes women in the Coastal Bend for their professional accomplishments. Since 1979, YWCA has honored 291 exceptional women who stand out in their career field through this award. These women are very deserving of recognition and serve as role models for young girls. As one of YWCA's major fundraisers, Y Women In Careers offers invaluable support for YWCA programs and communicates the vital role YWCA plays in our community.

Strong Alone, Fearless Together