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Contact: **Ryan Mielke**
Director of Public Affairs
(915) 521-7656 rmielke@umcelpaso.org
(915) 493-5235

Press Advisory:
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National Hospital Association Honors UMC For Regional And Binational COVID-19 Vaccine Efforts

EL PASO, Texas – America’s Essential Hospitals, a national trade association, has recognized University Medical Center of El Paso (UMC) for its regional and binational COVID-19 vaccination efforts during the pandemic.

America's Essential Hospitals, which represents more than 300 hospitals that care for low-income and other marginalized people, recognized UMC with a 2022 Gage Award for COVID-19 Innovations. The association presented the award June 23 at a luncheon at VITAL2022, its annual conference, in Boston.

UMC received its award for its regional and binational COVID-19 vaccine effort, which at the initial release of the vaccine helped lead the community to be one of the highest vaccinated metropolitan areas in state/country. UMC began its vaccination campaign on December 15th, 2020 and has administered over 330,000 vaccines (at the time of the applications submission) in the safest, quickest and most equitable manner. The initiative included vaccinating through a mega HUB site, four of neighborhood health clinics, utilizing a mobile health clinic to reach underserved/rural areas and vaccinating within the county’s two jail facilities. UMC also collaborated with over 150 community organizations

to vaccinate either their workforce or eligible clientele. To store large quantities of vaccines, UMC purchased three ultra-cold freezers that were shared with community partners. The hospital also worked with the City of El Paso to vaccinate patients on the city's waitlist.

“Our hospital has served our community for more than a century, and has been part of the response around the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1917 as well as our current COVID-19 pandemic,” said Jacob Cintron, UMC President & CEO. “With the arrival of vaccines, we wanted to do everything possible to facilitate getting hundreds of thousands of people vaccinated. Our partners, nurses, physicians and so many volunteers helped make it a reality. This award recognizes their efforts.”

“Even with the challenges and heavy costs of COVID-19, our hospitals found ways to innovate, improve care, and target upstream factors that affect health,” says Kalpana Ramiah, DrPH, MSc, America's Essential Hospitals' vice president of innovation and director of Essential Hospitals Institute. “We are proud to recognize UMC and our other awardees for their dedication to reaching marginalized people and overcoming barriers to care.”

The Gage Awards, named after association founder Larry Gage, honor and share successful and creative member hospital programs that improve patient care and meet community needs. Gage Awards in the COVID-19 Innovations category highlight innovative practices, projects, and programs related to the coronavirus pandemic. This temporary category captures creative solutions for the current or potential future pandemics within the hospital or in its community.

Leading up to the vaccine effort, the community along with UMC's team had already responded to the August 3rd tragedy, the tremendous surge of migrants from Central America and the devastating COVID-19 outbreak in the fall of 2020. To elaborate on the COVID-19 outbreak, between September 6th, 2020 - November 16th, 2020 there were

1,018 COVID-19 hospitalizations, 324 deaths and 63,000 new cases diagnosed. In one day, El Paso was seeing up to 3,100 new cases and 40 deaths. For those 71 days, the world watched as El Paso was ground zero for COVID-19 and tested the community as a whole. The race to protect the community through a vaccine was very real, especially given COVID-19 cases and hospitalization rates were two to three times higher for Hispanics; much in part due to having a higher rate of underlying health conditions (diabetes, asthma, and obesity) and influenced by other factors like social determinants of health. In a community with an 82% Hispanic population, UMC understood that to do nothing, or the minimal effort, would lead to continued devastation for the community and region, hence the push to distribute the vaccine widely and as quickly as possible.

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About UMC:

For 107 years, University Medical Center of El Paso (UMC) has been providing exceptional, high quality care for the entire El Paso region. UMC is home to the region's only Level I Trauma Center, the only Joint Commission-Certified Comprehensive Level I Stroke Center, the first Level IV Maternal Critical Care Center, and only Certified Baby-Friendly Hospital. UMC's mission is to Heal, to Serve and to Educate.

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