



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY MANAGER

File #: 20-870

Board Meeting Date: 11/17/2020

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Michael P. Callagy, County Manager
Subject: Team of the Month for November 2020

RECOMMENDATION:

Honor the San Mateo County Census Team as the Team of the Month for November 2020 and authorize the President of the Board to sign the commendation.

BACKGROUND:

The Team of the Month program was established in September 2018 to recognize and honor County teams who consistently demonstrate an outstanding level of performance.

Our Team of the Month for November 2020 is from the Office of Community Affairs in the County Manager's Office. Team members include: Emma Gonzalez, Megan Gosch, Melissa Vergara and Marilu Bedolla-Jaimes.

DISCUSSION:

For two years, the Census Team worked tirelessly coordinating outreach efforts across all parts of our County to ensure that as many San Mateo County residents as possible were counted in the 2020 Census. Under the leadership of Emma Gonzalez, the Census Team members did everything and anything needed for the Census effort, from door-to-door canvassing, to tabling at community events, to generating countless Census infographics, posters, flyers, online ads, and social media messages. In a rapidly changing environment, information was updated daily, and they needed to make sure all residents, especially those in hard to reach communities, had accurate and up-to-date information.

To ensure consistent messaging got through to all residents, the team produced messages in a variety of languages including English, Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese or other languages deemed appropriate. Leveraging existing communications channels used by partners, the Census Team developed a system where tailored messaging (ie. Video, audio, print, media and social media) was provided on a weekly basis. The Weekly Communications calendar provided trusted messengers with Census key messaging, infographics and imagery in multiple languages. This was a "turn the key" approach where users would receive messages and imagery ready to post on a daily basis. As a result, over 400 sample social media posts were supplied to the census email mailing list which

included elected officials, county department heads, city managers, public information officers, libraries, school districts, faith-based, and community-based organizations (over 300 agencies subscribed). This method allowed the Census Team to focus census messages at the local level using a micro-targeted approach. Recognizing that collaboration and communication were keys to a successful count, the Census Team convened stakeholders and partnered with trusted local community-based organizations across the County, and in particular in communities considered hard to count. The Census Team's multi-pronged approach to reaching such communities through a combination of targeted media, social media, messages communicated by trusted community partners, and in-person events served as a model for other counties.

The Census Team was undaunted by the pandemic, which exacerbated challenges in the operating environment and required the Team to quickly identify new strategies and adapt existing strategies. The Census Team convened hyper-local stakeholder groups across the County to help identify successful outreach strategies tailored to the needs of individual communities. For example, after data indicated a low response rate in a particular community, the Census Team engaged with city staff and partners and learned that residents of large apartment complexes in the community feared that individual census responses would be shared with landlords and/or property managers. Consequently, the team developed a door hanger, in four applicable languages, that addressed confidentiality concerns, specifically reassuring residents that information would not be shared with landlords and/or property owners. The team then organized a door-to-door canvassing efforts and engaged community volunteers to assist in education and outreach efforts. Such efforts characterized by hyper-local data-informed strategies, stakeholder feedback, and close collaboration with local partners were replicated across the County.

In addition to overcoming challenges in the operating environment, the Census Team had to contend with an ever-changing Census count deadline that shifted continuously based on the latest federal order or court decision. Despite these unprecedented hurdles, the Census Team never lost its versatility, its can-do spirit, and its commitment to the idea that all the County's residents deserve to be counted. In the end, the most important metric speaks for itself: San Mateo County had the highest self-responding county rate in the entire state of California--78.6%.

Our County is fortunate to have the San Mateo County Census Team as an outstanding Team.