When you ask Dr. Lillian Rivera, administrator of the Miami-Dade County (Fla.) Health Department, what the keys to public health leadership are, her answer is swift and sure: Passion, love for the community you serve, and continuous learning.

Colleagues validate that passion and love of community. “Her work is truly a calling. She has dedicated her entire career to improving the health status of our community and mentoring others,” says Nancy Humbert, vice president of strategic business planning and public affairs for Miami Children’s Hospital.

Rivera’s position includes the oversight and supervision of public health programs throughout the county of 2.5 million people. Over the past several years, she has reorganized the operation of the health department following the Malcolm Baldrige model of performance excellence. Baldrige, U.S. secretary of commerce from 1981 to 1987, was a proponent of quality management as a key to prosperity and long-term strength.

“I believe that collaborative practices need to be developed and sustained by leadership,” says Rivera, a registered nurse and graduate of the UNC School of Public Health’s National Public Health Leadership Institute (see page 7).

The focus on quality worked. Since its reorganization, the Miami-Dade health department has won the Florida Governor’s Sterling Award for Performance Excellence twice.

“Lillian’s unwavering commitment to drive and implement a performance excellence model throughout the Miami-Dade County Health Department resulted in marked and sustained improvement in key performance measures across the board,” says JoAnne Kroesen, director of the Office of Organizational Development and Public Health Nursing in the Miami-Dade health department. “She has the unique ability to strategically bring all levels of key stakeholders and customer groups together to develop collaborative partnerships and initiatives in an effort to improve and resolve public health issues.”

Rivera, a native of Puerto Rico, believes in helping her staff find training opportunities. She has sent Miami-Dade health department employees to attend the School’s Management Academy for Public Health, a nine-month executive education program of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health (see page 7).

She has sent Miami-Dade health department teams to attend the School’s Management Academy for Public Health, a nine-month executive education program of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health (see page 7).

“I believe that collaborative practices need to be developed and sustained by leadership,” she says. “Continuous learning and advancing the performance of our organizations is essential for viability and sustainability.”

---

Building partnerships to stop disease

Dr. Victor Cáceres is a lot of things: board-certified clinician, researcher, and a field epidemiologist who has investigated disease outbreaks. His friend and colleague, Dr. Augusto Lopez, says, “Victor’s participation always opens doors instead of closing them.”

A captain in the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, Cáceres serves as team leader for the Centers for Disease Control’s Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) in Central America, which trains epidemiologists to investigate disease outbreaks and promote public health in six countries.

Cáceres, who received his medical degree from the UNC School of Medicine and his master’s in maternal and child health from the UNC School of Public Health, is reluctant to call himself a leader, but likes the concept of servant leadership. “I like that attitude of a leader as a person developing others to help them become leaders themselves,” he says.

That’s just what Cáceres does in his work with the FETP. The effort began as one regional training program managed by the UNC School of Public Health, is reluctant to call himself a leader, but likes the concept of servant leadership. “I like that attitude of a leader as a person developing others to help them become leaders themselves,” he says.

That’s just what Cáceres does in his work with the FETP. The effort began as one regional training program managed by the UNC School of Public Health.

Cáceres, who received his medical degree from the UNC School of Medicine and his master’s in maternal and child health from the UNC School of Public Health, is reluctant to call himself a leader, but likes the concept of servant leadership. “I like that attitude of a leader as a person developing others to help them become leaders themselves,” he says.

That’s just what Cáceres does in his work with the FETP. The effort began as one regional training program managed by the UNC School of Public Health.

---

Dr. Victor Cáceres poses for a photograph with his wife, Susan, and son, Nicholas. Cáceres is a team leader for the Centers for Disease Control’s Field Epidemiology Training Program in Central America, which trains epidemiologists to investigate disease outbreaks and promote public health in six countries. He earned his master’s in maternal and child health from UNC.