



Dr. Lillian Rivera

Develop collaborative practices,

says head of Miami-Dade County Health Department

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. His managerial excellence contributed to long-term improvement in efficiency and effectiveness of government and led the U.S. Congress to name the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987 after him. Baldrige’s criteria for excellence includes seven areas: leadership; strategic

planning; customer and market focus; measurement, analysis, and knowledge management; human resource focus; process management; and results.

“With nearly 1,000 employees, we had to explain the value of this goal of transforming our organization and sell our employees on

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

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the process,” 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

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.” ■

– BY BEV HOLT