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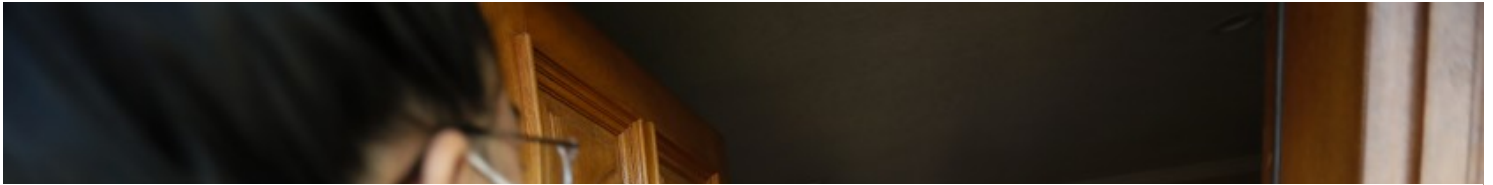
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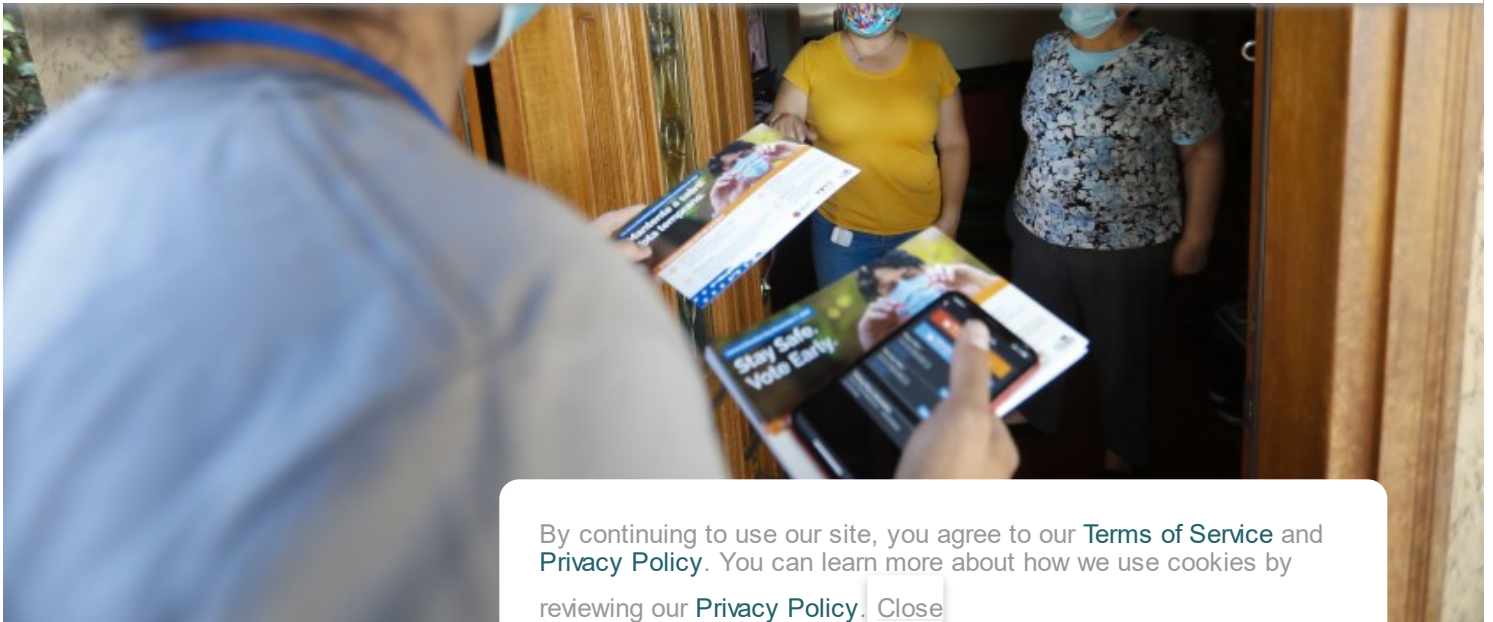
# San Diego health pros use trust, relationships to build voter turnout



The San Diego Union-Tribune

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Sterling Maldonado, a San Ysidro Health professional, encourage her to vote. (Nelvin C. Cepeda/ The San Diego Union-Tribune)

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# 'My Vote. My Health' engagement campaign targets low-income voters in San Ysidro, National City, Chula Vista

By ANDREA LOPEZ-VILLAFANA

OCT. 30, 2020 | 6 AM




SAN DIEGO — When Dr. Allen Rodriguez knocked on the doors of some South Bay homes earlier this month, the San Ysidro Health physician wasn't making medical house calls.

He looked like it, though. He was wearing a white doctor's coat and a stethoscope.

But he also came equipped with some get-out-the-vote fliers and a speech about why it's important to vote. His shirt with the word "Vote" was hard to miss, too.

Rodriguez is one of dozens of health care volunteers who are part of a new civic engagement campaign to increase voter turnout among low-income and minority residents.

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The “My Vote. My Health.” campaign, spearheaded by the health clinic AltaMed in Los Angeles, leverages the trust that nurses, health care staff and doctors enjoy in communities, to provide non-partisan voting information and assistance through clinic visits, door-to-door canvassing and phone banks.

Rodriguez said the campaign targets some of the most vulnerable people, who are underrepresented in politics and overrepresented among COVID-19 cases.

“That disenfranchisement has a real impact on their health potential,” Rodriguez said. “My patients matter, and their voices matter.”

The work is focused in minority communities in Chula Vista, National City and San Ysidro as well as in Los Angeles, Oakland, Anaheim, and Santa Ana.



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A recent poll by the Latino Community Foundation in San Francisco found that 73 percent of Latino voters across the state plan to vote on Nov. 3.

Eduardo Garcia, a senior policy fellow with the foundation, said that because the pandemic has stopped most in-person get-out-the-vote efforts, the work that health providers are doing has become more important.

“They have access, and they l  
organizations that focus excl

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The health care volunteers aren't supposed to discuss their political beliefs. Most are trained to tell people how and where to vote safely and to answer questions about voting. In addition to employees at San Ysidro Health, the campaign has 12 paid canvassers for in-person outreach.

Rodriguez said he has answered questions about staying safe during the pandemic and voting by mail.

"Getting people involved and engaged will have an impact in our community for years to come," Rodriguez said.



CHULA VISTA, CA - OCTOBER 29: On Th Rodriguez, MD wears a button ÒVote, M Cepeda/The San Diego Union-Tribune)

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The AltaMed clinic launched a similar get-out-the-vote effort during the March primary in partnership with San Ysidro Health and La Clinica de La Raza in Alameda County.

Volunteers with San Ysidro Health called or knocked on the doors of about 58,300 voters before March 3, reaching more than 4,280 voters in Chula Vista, National City and San Ysidro.

The University of California, Los Angeles’ Latino Policy and Politics Initiative authored a study that showed a nearly 13 percent increase in turnout among voters in the targeted communities who had not voted in the last three elections.

Ana Melgoza, vice president of external affairs for San Ysidro Health, said feedback from voters showed that people who voted in the primary did so because someone talked to them about the election.

“It’s important that we do this,” she said. “When you start talking to them about how their voice matters in policy, you see that they feel empowered.”

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