

MARICEL ABAD RECEIVES 2013 CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION CHAMPION AWARD



HONOLULU – Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) Public Health Nurse Maricel Abad, RN, has been named the 2013 CDC Childhood Immunization Champion for Hawaii in recognition of her outstanding efforts to promote childhood immunization. Each year, in connection with National Infant Immunization Week (April 20-26), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the CDC Foundation honor health professionals and community leaders from around the country with *CDC Childhood Immunization Champion* awards. These awards acknowledge exemplary individuals who go above and beyond to promote or foster immunizations among children 0-2 years old in their communities.

“This recognition is a reflection of Maricel’s passion and commitment in strengthening communities to support their own lifelong health and wellness,” said Joan Takamori, public health nursing branch chief. “Her strong work ethic and leadership qualities have greatly increased immunization efforts to help support healthy communities in Hawaii.”

A public health nurse with the DOH for the past 11 years, Abad has worked on promoting healthy communities through various initiatives including childhood immunization. Her work has focused on activities that increase access to health services among the most vulnerable in Hawaii and includes serving immigrant, migrant and minority groups. Born in the Philippines and raised in Maui, she is especially aware of the importance of working with Asian and Pacific Islander communities. Abad currently lives in Waipahu (Waipio) and works to provide services across the entire state.

“We are pleased to recognize our own DOH public health nurse, Maricel Abad, as this year’s Childhood Immunization Champion for Hawaii,” said Ronald Balajadia, Immunization Branch program manager. “She is a strong advocate for childhood immunization and, in addition to her

important work in public health, she participates in activities which extend well beyond her duties as a public health nurse, promoting and increasing vaccination of our keiki in Hawaii.”

Abad has submitted written testimony to Hawaii’s Legislature, as a private citizen, in support of immunization-related bills in the 2013 session. She is also a strong proponent of the Hawaii Immunization Registry (HIR), having been actively involved with HIR through system testing, oversight of implementation in her clinic, and statewide promotion to her fellow public health nurses, as well as private health care providers. In addition, Abad is an active member of the Hawaii Immunization Coalition (HIC), a non-profit 501(c)3 agency that promotes immunization education and partnering in support of immunization strategies.

“Immunization plays a key role in protecting the health of America’s children,” said Dr. Melinda Wharton, acting director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. “Ensuring that *all* children are immunized requires a cadre of dedicated health professionals and community leaders nationwide. The *Champion* awards give us the opportunity to salute these individuals for their service to our children.”

For more information about the CDC Childhood Immunization Champion Award, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niiw/champions/childhood.html>.