

MBNI USA

MINORITY BUSINESS NEWS



**InGenesis'
Dr. Veronica
Muzquiz
Edwards
succeeds by
giving back**



Dr. Veronica Muzquiz Edwards and her executive team with members of the San Antonio Fire Department

InGenesis' Dr. Edwards *succeeds by giving back*

BY PABLO SCHNEIDER

As the world watched Hurricane Harvey wreak havoc in the nation's fourth-largest city, InGenesis Inc. founder and CEO Dr. Veronica Muzquiz Edwards, the leadership team and company employees sprang into action at Houston's Texas Medical Center.

One nurse sought out a neighbor with a lifted truck to take her to work. The flooding and road closures turned a 45-minute commute into a two-hour challenge. Like other emergency responders, she reported to work and remained at the hospital — caring for patients — throughout the four-day crisis.

"The amazing thing is our people had flooded cars and homes, but they were determined to get to work to help those in need," Edwards said. "The company is the people. That's who shows up every day against all odds."

Launched in 1998 with one national contract, InGenesis is a workforce solutions company, currently managing over 3,500 professionals. Its sustained growth — without outside interest or venture capital — has made InGenesis the largest Hispanic-owned provider of health care personnel in the United States. Its specialization in clinical health care has earned it significant status within the health care industry, both nationally and internationally.

"Our recognition as a workforce solution partner to health systems lies squarely on the shoulders of our people — those with a passion for serving others," Edwards said.

When Hurricane Harvey brought devastating floods to Southeast Texas in August 2017, the damage to roadways and vehicles limited the mobility of residents, so InGenesis donated commuter passes to provide more than 5,000 trips for patients, students and associates in the Houston area.

Internal and external fundraisers were planned and employee assistance programs were made available. Without hesitation, Edwards created a fund for InGenesis employees to receive full pay for their week of lost wages caused by the hurricane.

When adversity strikes

With her doctoral dissertation on disaster preparedness and crisis management, she has found herself at ground zero in times of need. It's what she chose to do at those pivotal moments that has shaped the strong sense of global, social and corporate responsibility embraced by InGenesis.

"We earn and learn character through life's challenges," Edwards said.

ABOUT DR. VERONICA MUZQUIZ EDWARDS

High school fun fact: This year I am celebrating my 30th anniversary with my high school prom date ... my husband, Bryan.

College fun fact: I was a clarinet soloist and toured with the Texas State University Concert Band.

Last book read: "Upside: Profiting from the Profound Demographic Shifts Ahead" by Kenneth W. Gronbach

Role models: My parents Ray (retired U.S. deputy marshal) and Alma Muzquiz (Realtor)

Memorable vacation: Attending San Diego Comic-Con with my children, Austin and Sydney

Favorite leadership quote: "In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different" – Coco Chanel

Seven years ago, she lost her brother to complications of diabetes. He was 40.

"Losing someone you love — it's one of the hardest things any of us experience in our lifetime," she said.

Today, in honor of her brother, both Edwards and InGenesis are large contributors to the American Diabetes Association.

With partners like InGenesis, ADA shipped an estimated \$2.45 million of free diabetes supplies — including insulin — to survivors of Harvey and Hurricane Irma, which struck Florida and the Caribbean islands. Diabetic patients in need of resources were given 24/7 access to call centers and online support to help them find nearby pharmacies or medical facilities.

"Providing for our associates and our communities are responsibilities I take seriously," Edwards said. "I passionately believe in providing the right resources, at the right time, for the right reasons to those in need."

She serves as chair and head of the U.S. delegation for the U.S. Technical Advisory Group to the International Organization for Standardization to develop global standards for quality management in health care administration.

"How do we, as corporations [and] CEOs, handle natural disasters [and] pandemics? How do we prepare? As thought leaders, we must take this responsibility to our employees, our community and our clients very seriously," Edwards said.

When learning lessons shape the future

Seriousness was the last thing on her mind as a rambunctious first-grader — even though she said the thought process has paid dividends.

"What I learned through failing the first grade was exactly what has made me successful today," Edwards said. "I didn't color within the lines, and I talked too much in class. Most significantly, I daydreamed. Today, I still think outside the box, and I choose to

communicate and use my voice. I never stop thinking about grand possibilities and opportunities."

Eventually, she did make it to second grade, graduated from high school and went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Texas State University and an MBA and a doctorate from University of the Incarnate Word. The educational achievements that she credits for much of her own success, she encourages within InGenesis. Ninety-eight percent of its field employees have degrees or professional certifications.

The lessons Edwards learned from failing the first grade inspired her commitment to education and prompted her to serve as a trustee for the Texas State University System and University of the Incarnate Word.

"I'm proud to support a university system that seeks to increase diversity on campus and opens doors for those who may not think that college is possible," she said. Edwards walks the talk. Some 80 percent of her C-level leadership, directors, managers and field employees are diverse. And, 95 percent of InGenesis' supplier spend goes to diversity-certified companies.

As a first-generation Latina to earn a college degree, she knows the challenges of pursuing educational goals and dreams. When she received her doctorate in May, she shared the stage with her daughter, who was receiving her bachelor's. After the graduation ceremony, her teary-eyed mother revealed a 65-year old secret: She never graduated from high school.

"In an instant, we all realized that our educational perseverance and achievements were encouraged by our smartest role model," Edwards said. "Her secret was intended to encourage our educational endeavors. But, what she didn't realize was her education was never a factor; instead, her persistent Latina parenting had a positive effect on our educational focus." ■



InGenesis Inc. founder and CEO Dr. Veronica Muzquiz Edwards (center, plaid shirt) with some of her team members