

SISTER NORMA PIMENTEL TO RECEIVE THE HISPANIC HERITAGE AWARD FOR SERVICE ON SEPTEMBER 12 AT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AND PBS BROADCAST

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WASHINGTON, DC – The Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) announced today that Sister Norma Pimentel will receive the Hispanic Heritage Award for Service during the 31st Annual Hispanic Heritage Awards at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, on September 12, 2018. The Awards will be broadcast nationally on PBS stations during Hispanic Heritage Month. Sister Pimentel, also known as the “Pope’s Nun,” has been at the center of the refugee-family humanitarian crisis at the Texas border with Mexico and nationally.

The Hispanic Heritage Awards, which was created by the White House in 1987 to commemorate the establishment of Hispanic Heritage Month in America, are considered among the highest honors by Latinos for Latinos and are supported by 40 national Hispanic-serving institutions. The other 2018 Honorees will be announced over the summer followed by the performers, hosts and presenters (visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C92ZiK5MxAs>).

“The Hispanic Heritage Foundation is privileged to recognize the lifetime of service by Sister Norma Pimentel to ensure that all of God’s children are treated with dignity, empathy and love,” said Jose Antonio Tijerino, President and CEO of HHF. “Sister Norma served as an inspiration to me and many others through her work in the Rio Grande Valley on the Texas border with Mexico. She represents everyone that she has touched through her grace, especially the most vulnerable in our community.”

HHF is supporting Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley and Sister Pimentel’s efforts to build a new Humanitarian Respite center in McAllen, TX, to better help refugee families and youths who have been provisionally cleared and released by Border Protection by offering a first warm meal, bath, change of clothes, hygiene products, a call home, medical services, information of legal resources available, translations, and travel itinerary. To support Sister Pimentel, please click www.CatholicCharitiesRGV.org.

Sister Pimentel, M.J., is the executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley as well as an advocate for immigrants and refugees and the most vulnerable among us. Pope Francis publicly recognized and thanked Sister Pimentel for her work with immigrants and was recognized as one of the 2015 Catholics of the Year. She was also nominated for “Texan of the Year” and recently received the University of Notre Dame’s 2018 Laetare Medal — the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics.

Sister Pimentel, a religious sister of the Missionaries of Jesus, has been leading Catholic Charities in the Rio Grande Valley, which includes all four counties in the region bordering with Mexico, since 2008 by providing emergency food and shelter, housing assistance, clinical counseling and pregnancy care. She was a force on the frontlines of the 2014 surge of Central Americans seeking asylum in the United States or “unaccompanied minors” crisis, including the establishment of the Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas. These efforts captured the world’s attention, drawing news media from around the globe to the Rio Grande Valley to cover the plight of the countless and distressed refugee individuals and families, thereby compelling thousands from this country and others to contribute their time, talents, and treasures to serve and support the cause.

As the daughter of Mexican immigrants, Sister Pimentel was born in Texas but grew up going back and forth across the border. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Pan American University, a Master's in Theology from St. Mary's University, and a Masters' degree in Counseling Psychology from Loyola University Chicago.

She said, "I learned the importance of living out our faith by how we welcome and protect those who need us, ... an immigrant child or mother ... it is a moment of realizing we are all one human family."

Past Honorees of the Hispanic Heritage Awards have included Sonia Sotomayor, Rita Moreno, Plácido Domingo, Celia Cruz, Tito Puente, Gloria Estefan, Oscar Hijuelos, Martin Sheen, Ricky Martin, Rubén Blades, Fania All-Stars, Junot Díaz, José Feliciano, Carlos Vives, Alejandro Sanz, Juanes, Antonio Banderas, Juan Luis Guerra, Anthony Quinn, J Balvin, Zoe Saldana, Juan Marichal, Los Tigres Del Norte, Oscar de la Hoya, America Ferrera, Pedro Martinez, Luis Fonsi, Andy García, Gael Garcia Bernal, Latin Grammys, Diego Luna, and others.

About the Hispanic Heritage Foundation

The Hispanic Heritage Awards serve as a launch of HHF's year-round, award-winning programs which inspire, prepare and connect Latino leaders in the classroom, community and workforce to meet America's needs as well as promoting cultural pride. HHF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. For more information on the mission of HHF visit www.hispanicheritage.org.

For more information on the *2018 Hispanic Heritage Awards* or to request media credentials, please contact John Reilly at 212.878.5076 / jreilly@rogersandcowan.com or Sylvia Bedrosian: sbedrosian@rogersandcowan.com

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