



# Social Justice and Police Advocates for Women Critical Consciousness among Promotores de Salud

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HEALTH COMMISSION  
SERVING SOUTH SNOHOMISH COUNTY



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# The Power of Lay Health Promoters

Empirical research demonstrates that involving community members as lay health promoters helps to reduce health inequities in a number of ways:

by disrupting power relationships, bridging cultural divides, improving health outcomes and medical costs.<sup>1-10</sup>



# The WHO's Definition of Lay Health Worker

Lay health worker is a person who:

- Is a trusted community member
- Performs functions related to health care delivery and prevention
- Is trained in some way in the context of the issue
- Has usually not received a terminal or tertiary degree related to health.



(WHO, 2011)



# Popular Terms in the Literature that Fall Under the Umbrella of Lay Health Promotion



**Community Health Worker**

**Lay Health Promoter**

**Village Health Worker**

**Peer Health Advisor**

**Promotores de Salud or Promotores**

**Doulas/Birth Attendant**

**Patient Navigator**

# Impetus for This Study: Clarifying the Roles of CHWs in WA State

The WA CHW Task Force was created to develop policy and system change recommendations to align the Community Health Worker workforce with the Healthier Washington initiative.

Over a period of five months, members were tasked with making recommendations that would support the integration of community health workers into WA's health care system.

<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/healthier-washington/health-workforce#what-is-chw-task-force>



Some promotores and CHWs wanted to share more of their lived experiences.

**Promotoras de Salud from Familias Unidas, Lutheran Community Services, Snohomish County, WA 2014**  
[Photo by Sandra Huber]



# Volumes written about CHWs and lay health workers—but little published about the self-impact of being a promotor/a

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## **On the Front Lines of Prevention: *Promotores de Salud* and Their Role in Improving Primary Care for Latina Women, Families, and Communities**

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Sloane Burke-Winkelmann, *California State University Northridge*  
Aditi Joshi, *University of California Los Angeles*

### **Abstract**

Thousands of studies have documented the history and effectiveness of community health workers (CHWs) and their evolving role in population health over the last several decades. However, few published literature reviews have focused on the contributions of Latina/o CHWs (e.g., *promotores*) in developing countries and in underresourced communities within the United States. This article presents a review of the scholarly literature published in the last decade (2005–2015) and provides a snapshot of characteristics and factors that affect the important role of *promotores* as trusted liaisons and contributors to prevention and primary care. After filtering articles by inclusion criteria, we reviewed the final sample of 63 articles. Eight categories emerged from the literature: (1) factors that motivate individuals to become *promotora/es*, (2) descriptive characteristics of *promotores* and their settings for practice, (3) health issues most commonly addressed by *promotores*, (4) the effectiveness of programs involving *promotores* and lay health models, (5) the effect of lay health work on self-efficacy, (6) the role of *promotores* in community health advocacy, (7) occupational challenges and potential barriers to practice, and (8) best practices for training and supporting *promotores* as contributors to community health and health care systems. This review presents evidence that

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<http://www.hrpub.org>

## **Mending the Gaps: Community Health Workers in the Age of the Affordable Care Act**

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**Abstract** The Affordable Care Act recognizes Community Health Workers (CHWs) as lay health professionals that promote positive health behaviors and outcomes for patients in medically underserved communities. Despite this validation, there remains a lack of awareness, and some controversy, about the role of CHWs, the value of their work, and ultimately how their roles relate to primary care. The purpose of this feature article is to increase awareness about the contributions of community health workers to primary prevention and to report several key issues identified in the literature and from organizations working with CHWs about their evolving and multifaceted role in improving primary care and population health.

**Keywords** Community Health Workers, CHWs, Lay Health Promotion, Primary Care

behaviors and outcomes for patients in medically underserved communities. [1] Despite this validation, there remains a lack of awareness, and some controversy, about the role of CHWs, the value of their work, and ultimately how they contribute and operate within the broader context of the U.S. health system.

The purpose of this feature article is to increase health professionals' awareness about the contributions of community health workers to primary prevention, and to highlight several key issues in CHWs' evolving role, including: common descriptive characteristics of community health workers as found in the literature; CHWs' role as community liaisons to organizations and healthcare systems; outcomes associated with CHW-assisted health interventions; the impact of lay health promotion on communities and self; challenges in recruiting, training and supporting CHWs; and



# Research Questions

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- What are the lived experiences of promotores in Washington State?
- How does serving as a promotor/a impact one's self (e.g. confidence and self-efficacy)?
- What are some of the barriers promotores in WA encounter, and what are some of the resources available to them?
- How can organizations best support promotores and strengthen community engaged models for health promotion?

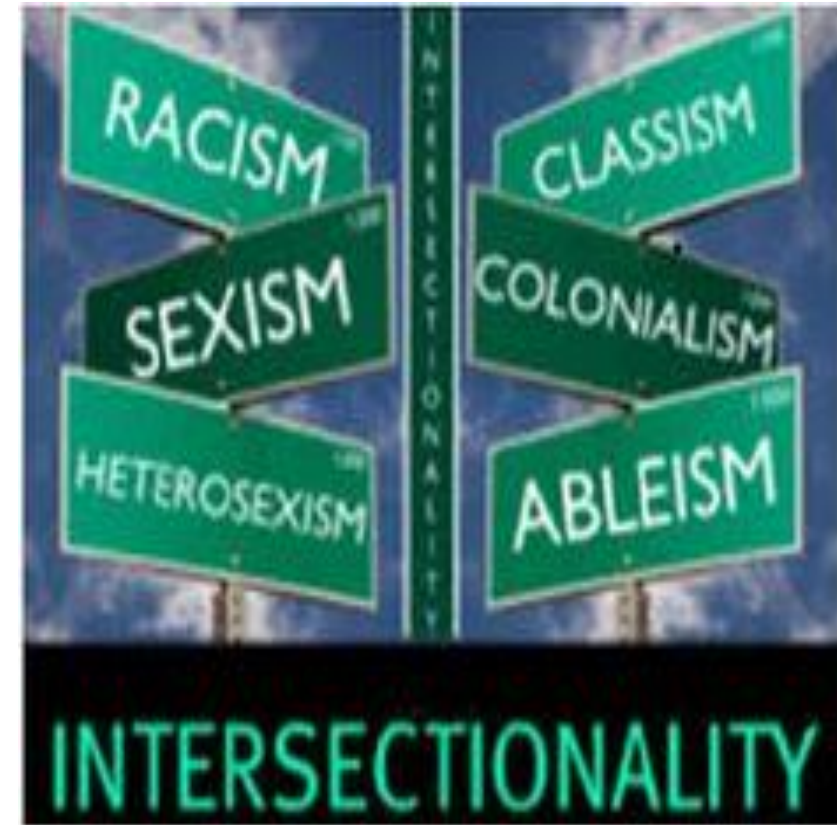




We explored the experiences of WA promotores using a **transnational feminist framework** and **Freirean constructs**.

# Transnational Feminism

- Not just a quest to end misogyny
- Examines power and privilege
- Recognizes inequalities across different groups of women
- Is not just one uniform movement
- Focuses on intersections across nationality (including race and ethnicity), sexual identities, culture, socio economics, etc. within the context of modern day imperialism and colonialism





# Study Design and Methods

- Exploratory and Phenomenological
- Received UW IRB approval in October of 2016
- Data Collection: October 2016 – Jan. 2018 (15 mos)
- Participants named the project, “Promotora Stories.”
- In-depth interviews (English and Spanish); audio recorded
- Semi-Structured Interviews; \$30 gift card incentives
- Setting: WA State
- Recruitment: Emails and flyers through CHW listservs; social media groups; clinics, churches, non-profits; word of mouth
- Volunteer and snowball sampling

Artwork by Shephard Fairey,  
*We the People* campaign





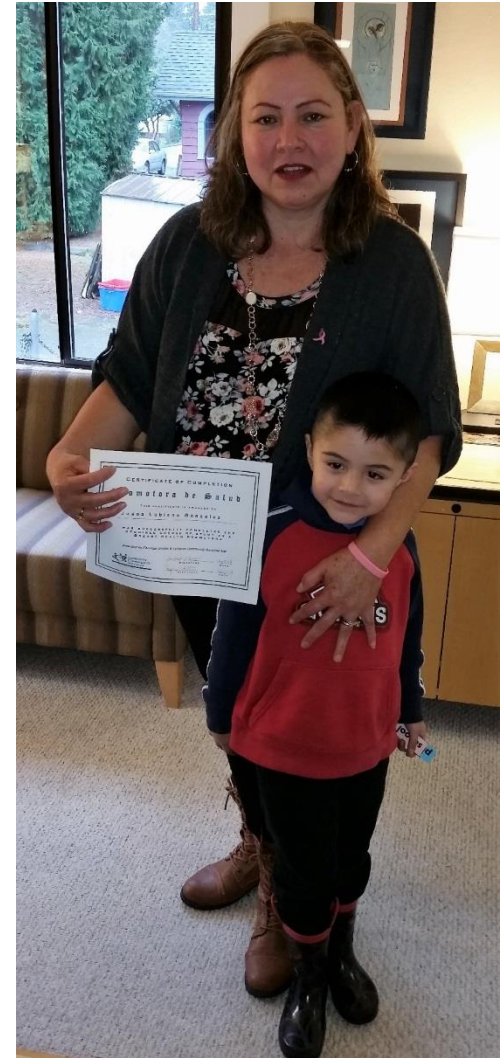
# Characteristics of Sample

- Final sample = 26
- Sample = red starred areas of state
- Mean age = 36 years of age
- Ages ranged from 25 to 60 years
- Schooling:
  - 93% had graduated from high school (n = 24);  
Three had a 2-year degree
- Country of Origin: 74% were born outside of the U.S. (n = 19)
  - Countries or origin outside the U.S. included:  
Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, Honduras, Argentina,  
Nicaragua and Panama
- 96% were married or partnered (n = 25)



# Characteristics of the Sample, cont'd

- All (n = 26) had worked as a promotora for two years or more
- All could read or speak English or Spanish
- Health Promotion Settings:
  - 71% worked with non-profits
  - 14% with clinics or health care systems
  - 7% with university programs in rural areas
  - 5% with school districts
  - 3% other or combination



# Emergent Categories

- Initiation
- Motivators
- Barriers
- Impact on Self
- Critical Consciousness



Photo courtesy of Latinos Promoting Good Health, Seattle, WA



# Initiation: What leads one to become a Promotora?

- The desire to help others
- Not about money
- Wanting to get more involved with the community
- Doing it to set the example for their children
- Paying it forward
- Influenced by the example of others
- For the learning opportunities
- Creating positive social change



# Motivators

- Helping others
- Love of learning
- Family and children
- Strengthening the community





# Motivators: Family and Children

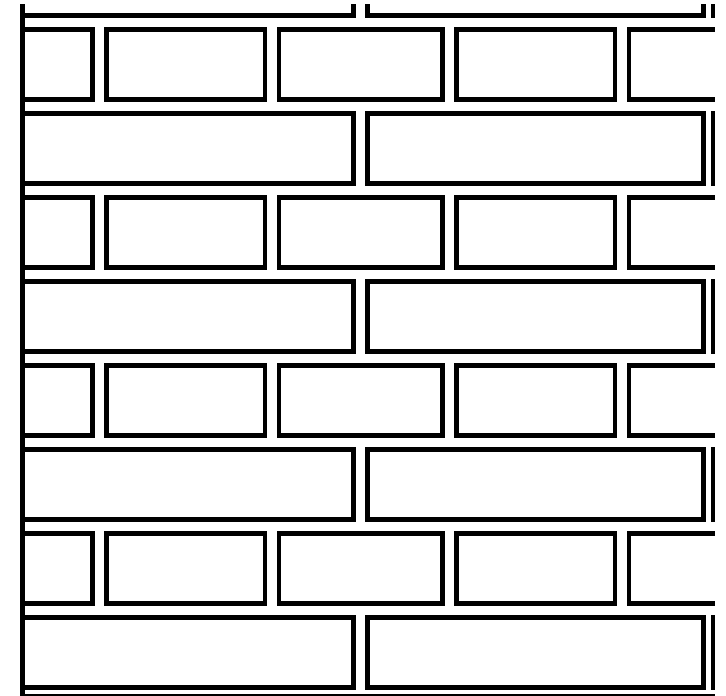
- “I try to get involved now. We have two kids. Even my husband is getting involved....They are growing up in this country. So we need to get involved. We need to get out there and see what we can do for them.”





# Barriers

- Lack of respect from partnering organizations
- Little to no compensation—few have jobs as a promotora
- Problems with transportation and child care
- Racism and discrimination
- Fear
- Language
- Compassion fatigue
- Need for more training/s
- Sometimes needs of self and family are not met due to so much service
- Low attendance or non-follow up by community members



# Compensate Fairly

- Most of the promotores we interviewed were “volunteers” and not compensated.
  - 82% of the women in this study (23/28) did not work part-time or full time as a promotora
  - More like volunteer work; some received gift cards
- **“We cannot pay our bills with ‘thank you’s.’ ”**
- At minimum, provide gift cards as well as transportation fare.



# Benefits: Impact on Self

- Improved self efficacy
- Increased self confidence
- Positive changes in health behavior
- Increased feelings of social support
- Increased social capital
- Motivation to keep learning



Artwork by Isabel Castillo Guijarro



# Impact on Self: Increased Self Confidence



“I am shy, but due to trainings I’ve received, I’m feeling more confident. This has helped my self esteem.”

“I’m more secure when talking with other parents about anything because not only have I experienced things, but I now have the knowledge to be credible.”

“It makes me feel strong and important.”

“Eventually I got my driver’s license because of being a promotora. I showed my kids I overcome my fears.”

# Impact on Self: Improved Well-Being

“I have made changes in my life. There has always been diabetes in my family, so now I know that I can reverse this with my lifestyle. I am doing the same thing for my kids.”

“One of the greatest lessons that I’ve learned from being a promotora: that we also have to take care of our own health.”





## Constructs from Paulo Freire

### “Critical Consciousness” or “Conscientization”

- The process of developing a critical awareness of one’s social reality through reflection and action.
- Action is fundamental because it is the process of changing the reality.

– *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*



# Critical Consciousness

“Visiting communities, especially our communities that are most marginalized helps us become more conscious of the issues.”



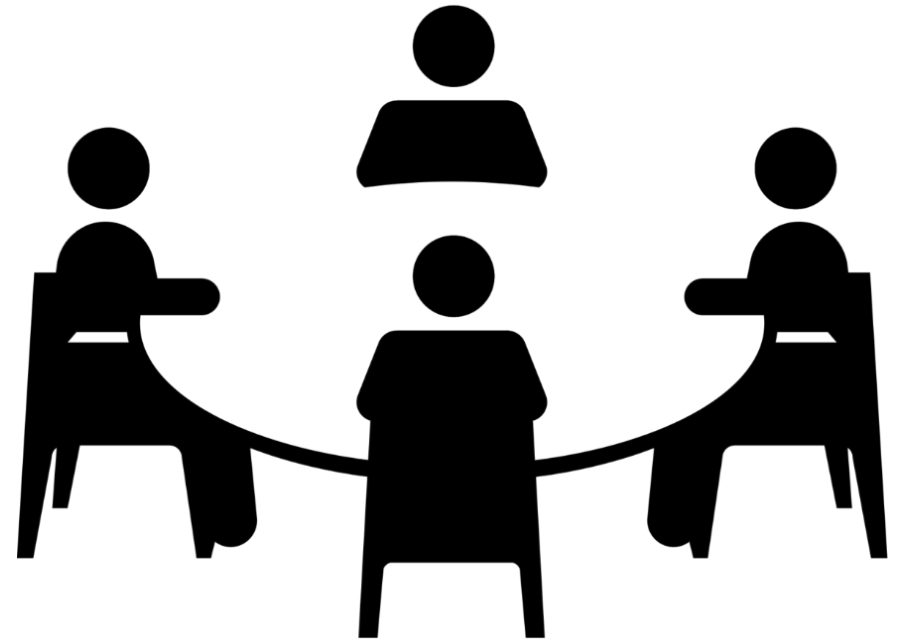
# Critical Consciousness

“Besides the self-esteem building, it helps you **see** things that you could not **see** before.”



# Moving from Self-Efficacy to Collective Efficacy

- “Being in the position I’m in now (manager), I’ve learned from being a promotora that **you cannot do it by yourself.** I’ve reached out to other agencies. **I’ve helped form a coalition.** I know I don’t have all of the answers, so I go to them, and **we work together to figure it out.**”





# Impact on Self: “Not Just a Promotora for Health”

“The truth is, I’m not only a health promotora, I’m an energy promotora. I’m an environment promotora. I’m a promotora of my beliefs and my spiritual beliefs also.”



Photo courtesy of Latinorebels.org, “I Dream,” project.

# Impact on Self Over Time: Seeing Themselves as Advocates



- Increasing knowledge not just about health issues but policy and politics
- Seeing their role as increasing community capacity through education
- Breaking down barriers for those trying to find resources or connect to health and social services
- Challenging the existing system or order of things
- Strengthening social support
- Helping to mobilize communities

**Women are the  
roots of healthier  
communities and  
positive social  
change.**



*Artwork by Olivia Oomen @Oliviaaveryart*



## In their own words...

Show Video <https://youtu.be/ntI3ADY-gfU>



**WOMEN ARE THE ROOTS OF CHANGE:  
PROMOTORA STORIES IN WASHINGTON STATE**

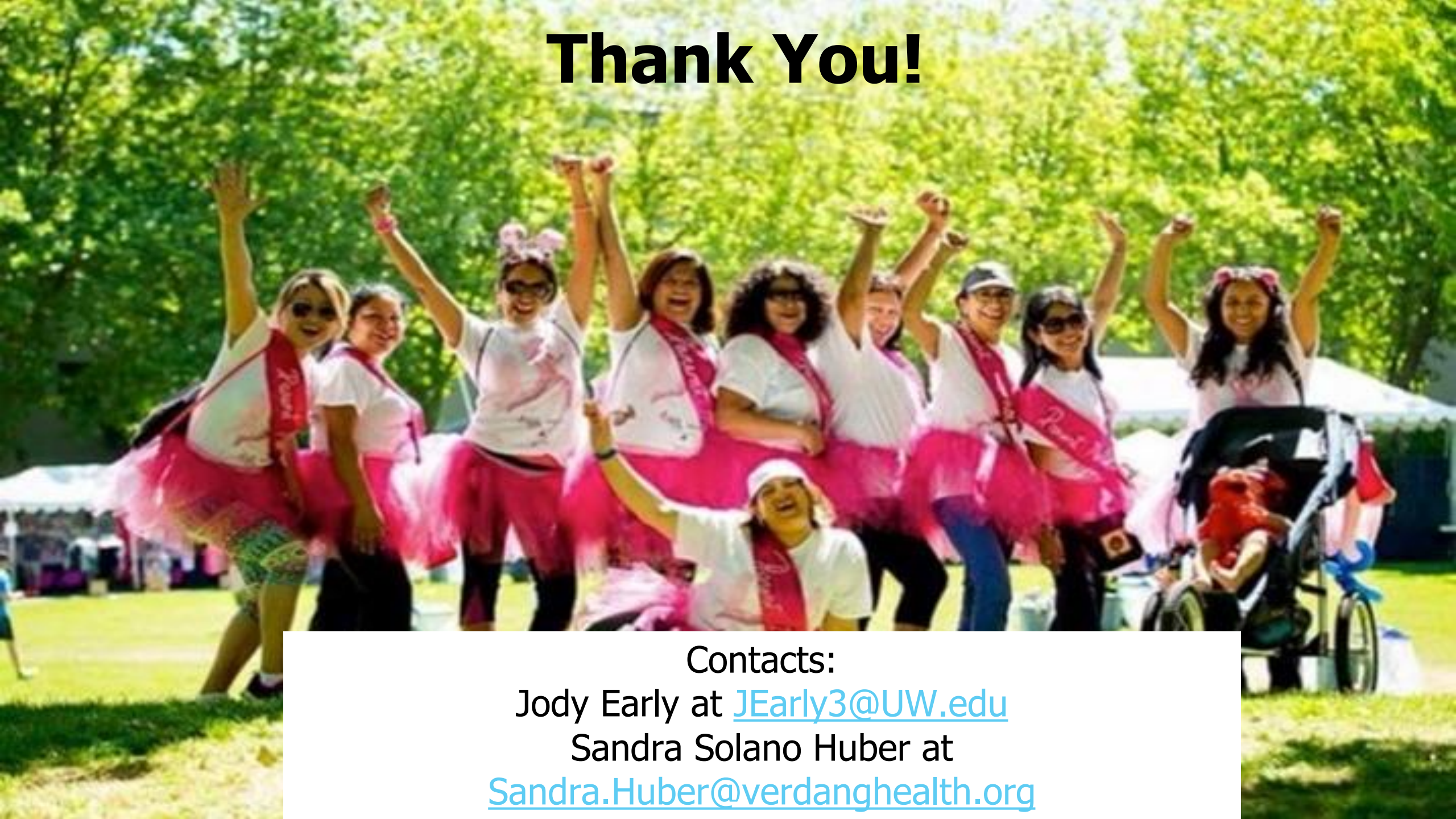
# Applying the Results: Future Steps



- Work with community organizations to create/provide more tailored training for promotores that help to build collective efficacy
- Advocate with and on behalf of lay health promoters at the state level to ensure that CHWs/promotores continue to have a place at the table in relation to policy development that impacts the integration of CHWs/lay health workers into health systems.
- Also explore and implement improved compensation models through expanded Medicaid or Accountable Health Organizations.
- Partner will help organizations and promotores evaluate the impact of lay health promotion.
- Explore the experiences of men who are serving in the role of promotor.



# Thank You!



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