

Make A Difference Award

The PIH Southeast Network is:

“A dynamic and passionate team that, with dignity and respect, inspires people, partnerships and performance to achieve HUD’s mission”



VA Case Worker Ramona Vargas.

THE HUD/VA VASH PROGRAM

The VASH Program combines Veterans Administration’s case management, clinical and medical centers services, with housing rental assistance via the Housing Choice Vouchers Program (HCVP) through Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) for homeless veterans and their families.

HUD invites selected PHAs near identified VA facilities to apply for vouchers. The need for HUD-VASH vouchers is based on annual “Point-in-Time” counts performed by “Continuums of Care” entities and VAMC data. The invitation to participate also takes into account the PHAs administrative performance.



The 2014 PIH Caribbean MADA Award

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Caribbean Office of Public Housing “**Make a Difference Award**” is intended to provide recognition for those that have demonstrated exceptional best practices leading to measurable and replicable outcomes in customer service and outstanding community initiatives in self-sufficiency and empowerment.

The “**Make a Difference Award**” is intended for public housing agencies staff, special programs and activities, such as Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), their personnel or sub-recipients that work closely with assigned communities, perform needs assessments, find opportunities for improvement, and/or implement actions to improve the quality of life of individuals and families making a difference in the lives of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development customers within Puerto

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VA Case Worker Ramona Vargas receiving her MADA 2014 award from HUD's PIH Director Antonio Córdoba. The award was presented during the First Puerto Rico VASH Participants Graduation, a ceremony that took place in October.

VASH PARTICIPANTS GRADUATION

This year's "Make a Difference Award" recipient is **Mrs. Ramona Vargas**, HUD/VASH Senior Social Worker/Case Manager at the **Veterans Administration Caribbean Healthcare System (VACHS)**, who works directly with patients receiving **Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH)**. Ms. Vargas is a graduate of the Hunter College School of Social Work. Her undergraduate studies were in mental health from Montgomery College and she earned a Bachelor's of Science in Early Education from Long Island University. Ms. Vargas has worked in the Social work profession for twenty plus years.

We congratulate Ramona Vargas for her 2014 MADA Award.

CELEBRATED BY ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2014 VASH GRADUATION CEREMONY

Ramona Vargas' initiative to create veterans self-empowerment groups "Veterans Helping Veterans" and the "Landlord Helping Landlord" demonstrate her capacity to identify an issue and develop a process to overcome obstacles. Her thoroughness in considering and effectively utilizing all available resources increases housing success has led to more veterans achieving permanent housing as well as maximizing voucher utilization. Vargas carefully considers all available parameters and avoids pitfalls that could trigger a relapse from the veteran into homelessness. Her resourcefulness has helped many veterans achieve self-sufficiency and significantly improve their quality of life.

Her outstanding work includes the delivery of case service management to homeless veterans, and building professional relationships to assist in the prompt housing of homeless veterans. She provides excellent customer service to decrease homeless recidivism and ensure veterans mental and physical healthcare. Her work is characterized by a wealth of compassion



From left: Antonio Sánchez VACHS, Ramona Vargas recipient of Make a Difference Award, VACHS; Efraín Maldonado, HUD Caribbean Field Office Director; Alberto Lastra, Secretary, Puerto Rico Department of Housing

MADA awards persons that through their leadership and tenacity represent the best example of providing service to HUD's customers.

Don't spend precious time asking: "Why isn't the world a better place? It will be a time wasted. The question to ask is: How can I make it better? To that there is an answer"

Leo Buscaglia