

## **PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

In a ceremony which took place at PAHO Headquarters in Washington DC on 14 June 2006, the PAHO Regional Blood Program recognized the contribution of volunteers who support voluntary blood donation, either through blood donor care or community education. Fourteen volunteers from throughout the Americas were honoured. They were selected from countries that have achieved voluntary blood donation rates of more than 40%, all having made a great contribution to the promotion of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation in their own country.

The National Blood Programmes of Brazil, the Cayman Islands, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Nicaragua, St Lucia, Suriname and Uruguay were each requested to identify and select the most outstanding voluntary blood donor or donor recruiter from their country. In addition, Canada, Chile (through their longstanding programme Campanitas) and the United States of America were invited to identify volunteers to be honoured in the ceremony.

Those honoured included donors who had donated blood for more than 25 years, promoters who had recruited thousands of voluntary donors, founders of donor clubs, and voluntary helpers at blood drives. Many different professions and ages were represented. PAHO Director, Dr Mirta Roses, praised the diverse group of volunteers, commenting that it was thanks to the work of these volunteers and many others that to date 11 countries of the Americas had achieved the goal of 50% of blood coming from voluntary non-remunerated donors.

A booklet containing pictures and testimonies of the selected volunteers was published in the four official languages of AMRO/PAHO and was available at the ceremony.

An expert panel meeting in Washington DC was held, to which representatives of the American Red Cross (ARC) and American Blood Centers (ABC) were invited. The objective of the meeting was to brief journalists on voluntary blood donation within the region. PAHO country offices were invited to organize similar activities.

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