



**Los Angeles County
District Attorney's Office**



THE COURAGE AWARDS

Friday, October 28, 2022

Sponsored by the Rotary Club of Los Angeles

AWARD RECIPIENTS

LINDA MCKEOWN

Nominated by Deputy District Attorney Tal Kahana

A mother dropped off her children at school on November 29, 2021, for her ex-husband to pick up later that day for his week of custody. A month before, the family court judge had granted the parents joint legal custody with rotating weeks and ordered that neither parent was to remove the children from Los Angeles. However, just days later on December 1, 2021, the father flew with the children to Dulles International Airport in Virginia and then bought one-way tickets to Russia. Ms. Linda McKeown was volunteering at the airport help desk that day and noticed a few things out of the ordinary with this family when they stopped to ask for assistance: the father was using new credit cards, the children seemed to be repeating a story they had just memorized and there was no luggage to speak of. She directed the family to get a COVID-19 test and called the police. The police detained the father and children and found no warrants. Still, Ms. McKeown did not give up. She Googled the father's name and discovered the case in family court. With that information, she found the mother's name, Facebook page and workplace. It was only when Ms. McKeown demanded to speak with the mother, was the mother made aware of the events happening across the country. Ms. McKeown re-contacted the police, who were able to stop the family from boarding the plane.

EDITH LOPEZ

Nominated by Deputy District Attorney Theresa Mitchell

Ms. Edith Lopez was hired in 2011 to work as an hourly, full-time employee for a janitorial company. Unfortunately, numerous labor law violations followed after she got the job. She was given a one-hour lunch break daily but no other breaks, she was not provided with sick pay/benefits, she was an acknowledged employee during her regular daytime work hours and a misclassified independent contractor for her overtime evening hours. She did not receive any overtime pay for the additional 20 hours per week and was given a 1099 to report her own taxes for those hours. When Ms. Lopez raised concerns, she was retaliated against and received a letter of termination. With the help of the tenants of the building she cleaned, Ms. Lopez was able to keep her job, but with reduced work hours, adding stress and health-related issues to her life. She was expected to perform the same amount of work on the same number of floors daily with her reduced hours. Ms. Lopez had the courage to come forward with critical information about the working conditions at the company, putting her job at risk during the investigation. She knew she was not the only victim. Because of Ms. Lopez's actions, dozens of other employees at the janitorial company were offered restitution.

MARTIN SANTILLAN

Nominated by Deputy District Attorney Chad Gillette

On July 11, 2018, Mr. Martin Santillan answered the door to the knocking of his neighbor's three young children crying for his help. He was told that their mother was being attacked by their father. Mr. Santillan ushered the children into his home to protect them as he saw the mother run from her home with the father chasing behind her with a chainsaw. Mr. Santillan could see the victim was bleeding heavily from cuts to her head, face and arm. As she fell to the ground next to a tree, the youngest son ran back out to shield her, placing himself in front of her. As the father approached, holding the chainsaw over the mother's head while attempting to restart it by pulling on the starter rope, Mr. Santillan walked toward him and attempted to talk and calm him down. Mr. Santillan was able to get close enough to take the chainsaw away and get the mother and her son into his home for protection. Mr. Santillan's courageous actions saved the victim's life.

