

# USING HER POSITION TO TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

## HEALTHCARE PROVIDER SUCCESS STORY



From the time she was 12-years-old, Gina Johnson knew she wanted to become a pediatrician practicing in the community in which she was raised. So, after graduating from Stanford University, UCLA Medical School, and residency at Children's Hospital in Oakland, she moved home to the San Fernando Valley.

"I really wanted to care for patients who weren't able to access good medical care," she says, explaining why her first job after her training was at the Northeast Valley Health Corporation (NEVHC) and why she is still there 18 years later, now as the medical director of pediatrics.

Nearly 95 percent of the NEVHC patients are low-income Latinos, and well over 50 percent of the pediatric patients are overweight or obese. "I grew up in this community, so I understand the perceived lack of safety, the fact that the parks aren't as nice as they should be, the ways soda companies overmarket their products to residents and the disproportionate number of liquor stores versus grocery stores."

Johnson is highly motivated to change the paradigm of obesity and improve the environment that today prevents her patients from practicing a healthy lifestyle. That's why she applied to the Champion Provider Fellowship. "We're all medically trained, but we didn't learn how to be communicators in medical school. The Fellowship's media and communications trainings, and learning how to present yourself with authority have been invaluable."

During her fellowship, Johnson has partnered with the Los Angeles Department of Public Health to implement food insecurity modules in NEVHC's electronic records system and refer patients who screen

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**"The Fellowship offered me the opportunity to look at policies, systems and environments, and see how I can improve my patients' lives."**

***Dr. Gina Johnson,  
Los Angeles, Medical Director***

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positive to resources for food. She participates on the NEVHC's new garden task force and encourages pop-up produce giveaways for patients.

Johnson has embraced the Champion Provider Fellowship's challenge to Fellows to transform communities through policy, systems and environmental (PSE) changes.

Recently she traveled to Sacramento to testify before the California State Senate Budget and Fiscal Review subcommittee about the NEVHC's wellness garden and food distribution program. Her state senator promised to look for opportunities to support NEVHC's work. She also wrote a letter educating legislators about the importance of making water and milk the default beverage in children's fast food restaurant meals.

*The Champion Provider Fellowship empowers, trains and supports doctors and dentists to use their expertise and respected voices to improve the health of communities through policy, systems and environmental changes.*

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