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5 Local Leaders Honored for Making a Difference in San Diego

SAN DIEGO, February 4, 2025 -- The Prebys Foundation has announced the recipients of its [2025 Prebys Leadership Awards](#), recognizing five exceptional leaders from organizations across San Diego County. These individuals have demonstrated a strong track record of creating conditions that support well-being—including mental health, healing, access to care, and human expression—throughout the region. Each honoree will receive \$100,000 to support their work in the fields of arts and culture, healthcare, medical research, and youth success.

This year's recipients include [Dr. Paula Aristizabal](#), pediatric oncologist of UC San Diego and Rady Children's Hospital, is a leader in healthcare, dedicated to improving outcomes for children with cancer by breaking down barriers for Hispanic children and their families; [Afira Arrastia-DeVries](#), President and CEO of the Monarch School Project, who leads the only K-12 public institution dedicated to providing a welcoming environment to unhoused students while support teachers across the country to learn how to better serve these youth and their families; [Andrew Carey](#), the Executive Director of the US-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership, leads a visionary team dedicated to cross-border collaboration with the mission of improving the lives of communities along the US-Mexico border; [Ben McCue](#) the Executive Director of Outdoor Outreach who has made remarkable strides in the field of outdoor education and environmental stewardship providing youth with opportunities for growth, development, and to find themselves; [Chris Rubio](#) the Artistic Director of Arms Wide Open a groundbreaking theater group dedicated to transforming lives and breaking down barriers for children on the autism spectrum and many others with special needs.

“Each of these leaders represents the type of leadership our community and country need—grounded in purpose, belonging, and opportunity, with the skills to innovate, scale their work, and collaborate,” said Prebys Foundation CEO Grant Oliphant. “These award recipients hold a vision that makes San Diego healthier, more welcoming, and a place where growth, healing, and dignity are accessible to all. Prebys Foundation is proud to honor these leaders and support them in building a more connected and caring region where residents thrive.”

More than 200 local leaders were nominated by fellow San Diegans for this prestigious award. “The talent and dedication in our region are immense,” said Oliphant. “We are fortunate to have a deep bench of visionary and committed leaders. Through this award, along with our investments in leadership development and nonprofit capacity, we aim to support the individuals and organizations that help San Diego stay healthy, obtain essential resources, and foster a strong, caring community.”

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About Prebys Foundation

Prebys Foundation is the largest independent private foundation in San Diego County. The foundation works to create an inclusive, equitable, and dynamic future for all San Diegans. Prebys advances

excellence and shared opportunity by investing in groundbreaking institutions, ideas, and people to ensure more residents are financially secure, healthy, empowered, and connected. For more information visit: PrebysFdn.org