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## Environment

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### San Diego-based lead task force wins EPA award

BY LILY LEUNG  
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2010 AT 6 A.M.

A task force that convinced San Diego city officials to tighten lead-abatement regulations was one of five programs in the country recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week for supporting environmental justice.



HOWARD LIPIN / UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF

Lourdes Hernandez, of Sherman Heights, stands outside of her apartment. Her unit was repainted with lead-free paint late 2007 thanks to efforts of a lead task force based in San Diego.

Since 2002, leaders of the **San Diego-based Lead Poisoning Prevention Citizen's Advisory Task Force** have educated residents on the dangers and prevalence of lead poisoning in their communities, particularly poor areas.

National City-based nonprofit group Environmental Health Coalition plays a key role in the alliance through its **"Campaign for Healthy Homes," formerly called the "Get the Lead Out" campaign**. Other partners are the San Diego Housing Commission and San Diego city.

"We are extremely proud of our collaboration and what we built through a really strong, effective partnership," said Leticia Ayala, programs director at the Environmental Health Coalition. "We're excited about this award and hope to share our model with other organizations across the country."

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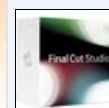
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The task force's work led to a 2008 city ordinance forcing landlords of pre-1978 homes fix lead issues. Since then, the task force has received more than \$18 million to continue educating people about the dangers of lead-based products, such as paint. That funding helped make some 800 homes lead-safe. Task-force members also trained and certified people to ensure workplaces meet lead guidelines.

Ayala said she hopes to replicate the lead-free program in other parts of the state by working **with the California Environmental Justice Alliance**. It educates low-income minorities about threats to their health.

Nationally, EPA honored a Minnesota-based partnership that successfully lobbied for light-rail stations and a San Francisco-based group that created an environmental-justice center for residents. See a complete list of winners [here](#).

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#### Kevin Hart

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