

Community

Friday, September 24, 2010 / 9A

ST. ANDREW'S CHILDREN'S CLINIC

'Coca' Romero wins high honor for work with kids



Photo/Vicki Fitzsimmons

Left to right: Consul General Jaime Paz y Puente; Marta Paz y Puente, a St. Andrew's Children's Clinic volunteer and wife of the consul general; and Maria Luz "Coca" Romero, patient coordinator at St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.

Nogales International

María Luz "Coca" Romero of Nogales has been recognized by the Mexican government for her work at St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.

Romero, the clinic's patient coordinator, received Mexico's Ohtli award from Consul

General Jaime Paz y Puente during a Mexican Independence celebration on Sept. 15 at the Mexican Consulate in Nogales.

The Ohtli award, which takes its name from an indigenous Náhuatl word meaning "road," was established in the 1990s by the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (Instituto de

los Mexicanos en el Exterior). It recognizes people who have dedicated a significant portion of their lives to the well-being of Mexicans and their descendants living outside of Mexico, a news release from the clinic said.

Romero's Ohtli award was the fourth to date sponsored by the Mexican Consulate in

Nogales, the clinic said.

After Romero's son Raymond was born with cerebral palsy, she found other mothers with disabled children in Nogales, Sonora to form a support group.

"From this small group of mothers, St. Andrew's Children's Clinic was formed over 35 years ago," the clinic's Vicki Fitzsimmons wrote in the news release. "When it outgrew space in homes and orphanages in Nogales, Sonora, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Nogales, Ariz. opened its arms and the clinic has been there ever since."

Romero has served as the clinic's patient coordinator since its inception. Her job is to screen patients for admission, facilitate transportation of patients and family members, coordinate immigration documents, and interact with assisting doctors, health professionals and agencies.

"Her telephone rings day and night with calls from parents desperate to find health care for their children," Fitzsimmons wrote. "You mention her name in small towns in Sonora and faces light up. They know her work for the poor and disabled children of Mexico."