Larissa Johnson is a champion of engaging the community and providing public service through her work with the Network for a Healthy California in the Department of Pediatrics, Center for Community Health. Larissa's notable contributions in the areas of nutrition and physical activity have undoubtedly had a positive impact on our community with long lasting effects. Larissa Johnson’s dedication, passion and professionalism have enabled the Network for a Healthy California to exceed the required reach numbers for the campaigns that she not only directly oversees, but those she collaborates with as well. Larissa has exceeded grant-specified target numbers and goals by 28% despite serious budget.

Larissa has set a high standard for nutrition and physical activity promotion throughout San Diego and broadened the scope of collaborations between the division and a wide variety of community partners and industry with the focus of improving health of the region. Some of the more innovative partnerships Larissa has developed include the FriarFit Initiative with the Padres to improve nutritional and physical health of children and their families. Through FriarFit, Larissa has worked with The Padres, California Endowment and San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative to improve the nutritional value and availability of healthier food choices at PETCO Park. Twelve concession items have now been added or upgraded on the menu, plus seven FriarFit food choices are now available at the kids’ "Friar Shack" concession stand. The Padres are also conducting a FriarFit Instant Recess fitness break out at the Park. Finally, pedometers are distributed to children at FriarFit events in the ballpark and at various community events, as well as to Padres employees, as incentives to exercise. The customized FriarFit pedometers are a helpful tool to allow fans to track their fitness activities and reach their health goals.

Larissa also established a partnership with the Hilton Hotel's Hunger at Home fundraising event to raise monies and provide nutrition education for San Diego’s hungry. Larissa, along with the Food Bank and 26 Hilton hotels were partners in creating the nutrition education Adopt-a-School program aimed at combating childhood hunger and obesity rates throughout the county. Hilton Family chefs and Larissa have adopted low-income schools to teach students how to cook nutritious food, grow school gardens and provide nutrition education to low-income parents.

Larissa's has developed many unique and innovative programs that improve the health of low-income community members. The Physical Activity Resource Database (PARD) was created to promote low price or free physical activities throughout San Diego and Imperial counties. She worked tirelessly to ensure the database contained a variety of activities that could easily be searched by zip code and type. Also, Larissa developed Parents on the Go (PoGO) program which teaches parents to be role models for their children by being physically active. This program has been adopted by San Diego and Escondido Unified School Districts and has reached thousands of parents. In addition, Larissa has played a key role in promoting physical activity throughout the County through The ICAN San Diego Street Team which is comprised of youth volunteers from the community who incorporate physical activities into community events. Larissa partnered with local physical activity providers like Pro K Golf, Alternative Healing Network, Eveoke and Transcendance dance troupes, and Copley YMCA to provide training and activities at various community events. The goal is to encourage kids and families to participate in fun, new sports they may not otherwise have access to or know about. Several videos of The Street Team activities have been featured on You-Tube.

Larissa also promotes Family Fitness Days at the City Heights Farmers’ Market (CHFM). The CHFM is the first EBT/Food Stamps-accessible farmers’ market in San Diego and strives to not only to offer fresh, local produce at affordable prices but creates a community space that goes beyond the typical farmers’ market to provide innovative services and programming, including emphasis on physical wellness. The CHFM hosts a monthly Family Fitness Day, featuring events run by Larissa where free or low cost physical activities available in or around City Heights are highlighted. Examples of these include zumba classes, miniature golf, yoga, dancing, aerobics, step training, and others.

Furthermore, Larissa has recruited and worked with over 200 Community Youth Organizations (CYO), such as Harmonium, Say San Diego, and YMCA, Girl Scouts and has reached over nine thousand youth through nutrition and physical activities. Larissa provides training and technical assistance to the CYO site leaders, on the fun, interactive activities that encourage children to eat fruits and vegetables and engage in physical activity. Finally, out of Larissa’s partnership with the San Diego County Parks and Recreation Department, San Diego County's Childhood Obesity Initiative, and Dr. Chris Searles, the Physical Activity Prescription Card was created. A “prescription” for exercise is written by a physician for patients whose health is at-risk due to lack of physical activity.

Because of Larissa Johnson’s community outreach, her innovative partnerships with the community and industry, and her public service to the low-income community, she has had a positive impact on the health of thousands of children and their families thus supporting UC San Diego’s mission.