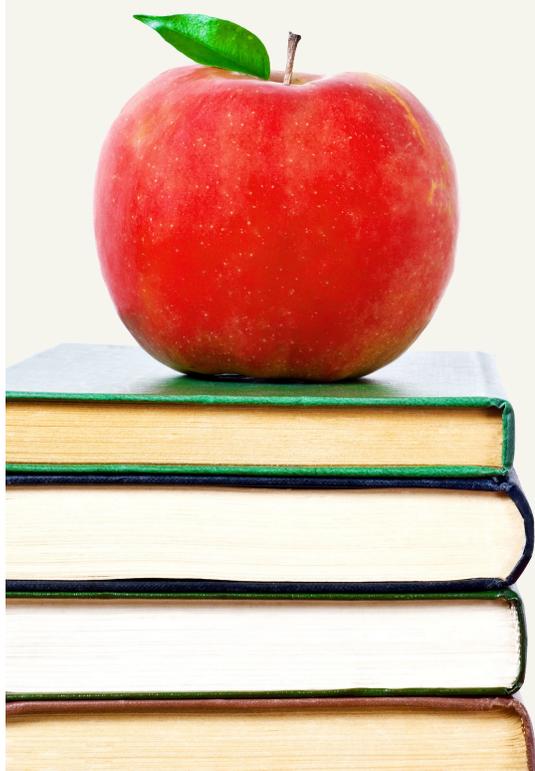




PASO DEL NORTE HEALTH FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER • SEPTEMBER 2016



Back to school – A healthy start

SEPTEMBER is a busy time for parents and kids, as they get into the rhythm of another school year. The Paso del Norte Health Foundation is also busy working with its partners to provide a variety of programs that focus on the health and well-being of students in the region. From school-based community gardens to dating violence curriculum, nonprofit organizations and institutions are offering students and families the tools and information they need to lead healthy lives. ✎



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H.E.A.L. IN ACTION

Programs make an impact in Paso del Norte region schools

PASO del Norte Health Foundation's Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) grantees in Mexico are working hard to make a measurable difference in health by providing children with healthy meals and physical activity opportunities through programs linked to the school day (before, during, or after school).

In Juárez, Arbol de Vida offers nutritious meals before and after school along with physical activity programming. **Ciudadanos Comprometidos con la Paz (CCOMPAZ)** provides meals, teaches portion control and healthy food preparation, and offers physical activities for children. **In Palomas, Border Partners** is providing nutrition and gardening classes, as well as facility development to increase fruit and vegetable intake and physical activity opportunities for children and their families.

Support from the Paso del Norte Institute for Health Living (IHL) helps these partners establish programs based on the best evidence and use state-of-the-art tools to objectively evaluate the impact of the programs. The IHL team works with these organizations to collect data related to the intended health outcomes of the program. For example, a

series of physical fitness tests, called FitnessGram, are administered to children at the beginning and end of the program to determine if the physical activity programs are successfully increasing fitness levels. These tests assess the three primary components of physical fitness: cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and flexibility.

Additionally, quality physical activity programs are expected to help children maintain or build additional muscle mass. The IHL assesses changes in muscle mass by measuring a child's body composition before and after participation in a program with technology called bioelectrical impedance analysis. This non-invasive assessment is completed in just a few minutes and simply requires that the child stand on a special scale.

For programs that target improving nutrition through increased fruit and vegetable intake, the IHL uses a "veggie-meter" to assess changes in carotenoids, compounds that scientists use as a biomarker of total fruit and vegetable intake. This methodology, known as reflectance spectroscopy, is also non-invasive and takes less than a minute to complete.

To learn more about the IHL, visit www.pdnihl.org. 



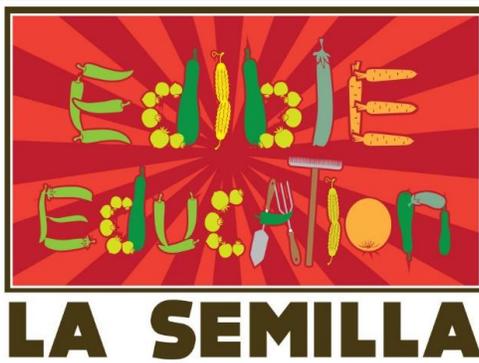
FINDING WAYS TO GET KIDS TO EAT BETTER

Edible Education reaches more students

LA SEMILLA FOOD CENTER and its Edible Education program speak directly to the impact the Paso del Norte Health Foundation’s Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) initiative is having along the Las Cruces corridor.

That’s why La Semilla and the Paso del Norte Health Foundation have partnered to expand the popular Edible Education to up to eight schools in the Las Cruces and Gadsen school districts during the 2016-17 academic year.

“The goal of our Edible Education curriculum is to influence the preferences, attitudes, and eating behaviors of students in favor of healthier foods and enjoyable physical activity,” said Elizabeth Anihini, edible education program manager. “The curriculum integrates hands-on, experiential school garden activities, garden-based lessons and instructional materials, and classroom cooking activities. In our gardens and classroom kitchens we’re working to ensure that all children have access to the joyful,



transformative power of growing, preparing, and enjoying fresh and healthy food.”

Teachers will be trained with the first Professional Development workshop for schools and teachers in September. “Almost all of the teachers who join our program are new

to gardening, classroom cooking and nutrition education,” explained Anichini. “Our staff has received extensive training in Edible Education implementation through FoodCorps Inc., Edible School Yard, Slow Food USA, and others.” As part of the program, each school will have installed garden vegetable beds ready to plant by January 2017.

La Semilla has worked with the Paso del Norte Health Foundation to advance HEAL objectives over the past four years. The current collaboration on Edible Education plans to increase the number of youth consuming five or more servings per day of fruits and vegetables. ✨

“In our gardens and classroom kitchens we’re working to ensure that all children have access to the joyful, transformative power of growing, preparing, and enjoying fresh and healthy food.”

– ELIZABETH ANIHINI, LA SEMILLA



Working to prevent dating violence

AS students return to school in the fall, several will participate in a pilot program on teen dating violence prevention: Me and You Curriculum. At the request of the El Paso Independent School District, the Paso del Norte Health Foundation collaborated with Health Advocates, LLC to assist with the design and pilot testing of a regional dating violence prevention curriculum for middle and high school students.

Parents, school personnel, and students from local districts in Deming, NM, and El Paso, TX, participated in a needs assessment on dating violence prevention initiatives in their schools. An advisory team of six teachers from regional school districts reviewed program models and identified six topics that will serve as the lessons shared with students. Topics include:

- Defining dating violence
- Characteristics of healthy relationships
- Warning signs for dating violence
- Prevention and ways to stop dating violence
- Community influences on dating violence prevention
- Technology and dating violence prevention

Deming Public Schools and El Paso Independent School District have identified schools and teachers that will participate in the pilot testing phase starting September 2016. ✎



Eat your veggies, get a prize? It works

CAN children in middle school learn to eat their fruits and vegetables?

Students at Hillcrest Middle School, Rio Bravo Middle School, and Valley View Middle School were put to the test as part of a project coordinated by New Mexico State University, Ysleta Independent School District, and the Paso del Norte Health Foundation.

The goal to increase fruit and vegetable consumption was set using techniques originating from a classical learning theory that reinforces and rewards healthy behaviors through deployment of small monetary incentives and through health-related messages during the lunch period.

“Social settings, such as cafeterias, are excellent environments to accelerate the learning process and lower the cost of the interventions,” said Mihai Niculescu, associate professor at New Mexico State University.

So far, the benefits of randomly rewarding students include the “intervention” receiving extensive attention from everyone without the need to reward each student individually. A series of random rewards also created social desirability around good eating habits, since the outcome benefitted not only the person who got the monetary reward, but also students who followed the same behavior.

“We found that motivating not only the student, but his friends as well, increases the acceptability of the intervention within the peer group, and ultimately increases the chance of adopting a new behavior,” Niculescu said. ✎



TEENS AGAINST TOBACCO USE

Peer-teaching model spreads the message

C ALL it the power of partnerships. El Paso Independent School District (EPISD), the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health - El Paso Regional Campus (UT Health), and Paso del Norte Health Foundation (PdNHF) are working together to educate youth about the dangers of tobacco.

Teens Against Tobacco Use is a collaboration that started in 2014-15 when Dr. Louis Brown, assistant professor of Health Promotion and Behavioral Science at UT Health, implemented the delivery of 160 anti-tobacco presentations by 60 students, reaching more than 2,500 students within EPISD.

The newest collaboration slated for the 2016-17 school year will implement three youth coalitions as an after-school activity, train youth in a peer-teaching model to deliver Teens Against Tobacco Use lessons to younger peers, and advocate for tobacco control policies.

The formation of youth coalitions around tobacco prevention is regarded as an innovative health promotion strategy that empowers youth to serve as both educators and health policy advocates. The peer-teaching model will unfold at Austin High School, Guillen Middle School, and Wiggs Middle School, where students

will be recruited and trained to develop and deliver anti-tobacco presentations to younger students.

“There has been a growing interest in the use of peers as educators,” said Dr. Brown. “It’s still not the dominant form of education in the United States, but I think it’s particularly effective where we’re using near-peers: high school students presenting to middle school students, middle school students presenting to elementary school students.”

Youth coalition members also will complete tobacco retailer compliance checks, create and disseminate anti-tobacco videos via social media channels, and participate in letter-writing campaigns for tobacco control policies as part of their after-school activities.

EPISD Health and Wellness Director John Adams said the district plans to have the first training at the three campuses in mid-September. Partnering again with UT Health and PdNHF on smoke-free policies makes this work all the more impactful.

“It’s critical because when we work in silos, less gets done,” Adams said. “Delivering the same message makes it more powerful. Health education in schools is far from what public health is in the public sector. That’s why it’s important to have access to other organizations.” 