Niños Sanos, Familia Sana - Firebaugh
August, 2015

New Cooking Classes and Support Groups Yield Benefits for Participants

Our new hands-on cooking classes, Cooking with Maria and Rosalba, provided our Firebaugh families with fun activities for parents and children. In March, the lessons focused on the benefits of cooking with children, including development of motor and social skills and increasing children’s interest in trying new foods. In April, Maria Rios and Rosalba Linares led a discussion on using praise rather than sweets to reward good behavior. The children loved learning how to make salads and dyed hard-boiled eggs with food coloring. See new recipe on back page of this newsletter!

Two support groups for parents with overweight or obese children met three times in these past months to problem-solve barriers to exercise and healthy eating. The new UC Cooperative Extension specialist from UC Merced, Dr. Karina Diaz Rios, attended these sessions with Dr. Lucia Kaiser. We thank Jeany Lopez from Valley Health Clinic for helping lead the groups in May. Thanks to Berta Flores and Cecelia Casas, the walking club continued meeting most Wednesdays. They also support the Firebaugh Harvest Festival/River Walk & Run.

Drought Impacts Family Budgets

Graduate student Lizette Rodriguez, Program Assistant Ivan Garcia, and Dr. Lucia Kaiser conducted four focus groups with Firebaugh mothers and fathers to learn more about how the drought is affecting families. Many mothers reported having to limit their shopping list and family outings because of their limited budget. They emphasized the importance of keeping families together in the face of this stressful situation. The fathers talked about the interconnections between environmental changes, employment, and community sustainability. Although some fathers may currently be less affected (employment-wise), they ultimately see that all will be affected. For example, with less water, fewer migrant workers come to the Firebaugh area or people move away, and local business has declined.

Niños Sanos Presented in Boston and Journals

Graduate student Alberto Aguilera presented preliminary results on dietary changes from the intervention at the Experimental Biology meeting in Boston in late March. In Firebaugh, we have observed a significant decrease among children in the frequency of consuming high-fat, high-sugar foods. These results will also be included as part of Alberto’s doctoral dissertation. The nutrition team has published a paper on the process of culturally adapting nutrition curricula to Mexican-origin audiences. This paper is now online in the May issue of Preventing Chronic Disease. We are in the process of creating a website where all of the lessons, recipes, and handouts can be downloaded free of charge in the near future.

Niños Sanos, Familia Sana Enters its Final Year with Plans for Sustaining Community Partnership

From the Project Director...

It seems like it was only yesterday when we first met at the Firebaugh Community Center to explore developing a grant application to work with the community and school district on a childhood obesity prevention project. As we enter our fifth and final year of the USDA-funded project Niños Sanos, Familia Sana, I look back with great pleasure on these years when strangers became partners, and partners became friends. In addition to discussing plans for this final year of the grant-related work, I want to look ahead as well to ways in which we hope to partner with the Firebaugh community in the coming years.

Over the next several months we will be analyzing second- and third-year intervention data that measure our success in helping parents to manage their children’s health relative to nutritional intake and weight. These measures help us to determine on a clinical level the success of the voucher and education programs in which we have partnered over the past three years. We’ll continue to take measurements of our child participants at the school sites in October and February and ask families to complete some final questionnaires, including a brief exit survey. The survey will be conducted as part of the final interview process and will give an opportunity for parents to provide feedback on their experience in NSFS. We will report on all findings in the coming year.
We have had a team of economists collecting and analyzing store purchase data that families have provided through the loyalty and voucher card scans. We will be reporting on findings relating to trends in family purchase habits as a result of this work.

After hearing feedback from participants on the impact the drought has had on food security, we have supported a graduate student who has been investigating this concern in discussion in a series of community meetings. We’ll be reporting on these findings in the coming months.

Data aside, we have observed many positive changes have occurred in Firebaugh during this time: Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District has added physical education teachers and SPARK, a National Institutes of Health – sponsored PE curriculum, to create a comprehensive P-5 PE program. The district has also made substantial changes to nutritional offerings at all schools with the appointment of a new food services director.

Most recently, the community came together to re-launch its annual river walk and run – an event that had seen 20 years since its last occurrence – in July. See the event write-up elsewhere in this newsletter. The city’s focus on creation of a community-wide culture of health has led to an application for federal assistance to improve and expand the existing nature trail for future recreational and organized-event usage, such as walks and runs.

In the coming year, the nutrition team is finalizing design and production of the nutrition education curriculum we developed in English and Spanish with leadership from our UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) partners and ongoing feedback from participants in the family education program and our Community Advisory Council. Dr. Lucia Kaiser will continue to work with our UCCE partners so we are able to make these materials available in Spanish and English via our NSFS web site. As a nationally funded project, we will also submit all curricular materials to the US Department of Agriculture for public access through their web site. Many schools and educators go to the federal web sites for curricular materials. Sharing NSFS-developed materials on the USDA web site will be an important way to give national visibility to this project.

It is my goal to continue partnering with the City of Firebaugh, the Firebaugh-Las Deltas Unified School District and other local community partners in the coming years. We have forged a highly productive partnership that includes a strong push to bring additional educational resources to the district and community, from private foundations and the US Department of Education.

Most recently, we have agreed to work with the City of Firebaugh on a submission to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2016 for a community health award. We fully intend to keep this momentum going and will be in touch with key community and district leadership as additional opportunities come our way. Likewise, we welcome requests for collaboration from Firebaugh civic and school leadership as you find opportunities for grants and awards that you wish to pursue.

Puente Cultural helps parents support their children’s success in school

Mrs. Maria Rios and Mrs. Bertha Flores have been working with Dr. Rosa Manzo to facilitate early childhood literacy workshops at our Firebaugh office. Mrs. Rios and Mrs. Flores are currently recruiting parents interested in attending the workshop, which will take place at Bailey Elementary School. For more information, please contact Mrs. Maria Rios at (559) 790-6319.

Tips for supporting your children’s education:

The national Parent Teacher Association (PTA) offers guides for parents to help their children succeed in school. The guides provide information about the content children should be learning in language arts and mathematics; activities that parents can do at home to enhance their children’s learning; resources to help parents foster strong parent-teacher relationships; and tools to help parents plan for college. Please follow the links below to obtain information in English and Spanish.

**Links to Internet resources for parents:**

http://www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583

http://www.colorincolorado.org/familias/parente-maestro/

NSFS News Submitted to new USDA Blog Site

The US Department of Agriculture, which supports the NSFS five-year child obesity prevention program, has established a new “blog” site on the Internet. Blog sites enable contributors to submit commentary and news under specific topics. The goal of the USDA Child Obesity Prevention blog site is to keep
legislators informed of the many wonderful programs supported by this federal funding allocation and their impact on community health. With more evidence of impact in the public domain, legislators will be more inclined to continue and enhance funding for this extremely important USDA program. NSFS submitted the following contribution to the USDA blog site.

**Participation in USDA-NIFA-funded childhood obesity-prevention program yields sustained commitment to healthy lifestyles in rural California Mexican-American community**

FIREBAUGH, CA – A culture of health has emerged in Firebaugh, a small, rural agricultural community located in the heart of California’s Central Valley. Home to many farmworker families of Mexican descent, Firebaugh has participated for the past four years in the Niños Sanos, Familia Sana (NSFS - Healthy Children, Healthy Family) childhood obesity prevention research, extension and education program. NSFS is funded by a grant from the US Department of Agriculture / National Institute for Food and Agriculture. Early findings in the NSFS research indicate a slower weight gain among obese boys, as well as a reduction in children’s consumption of high-fat, high-sugar foods in Firebaugh, which served as the intervention community for the study.

During three years of the five-year study period, Firebaugh participants received monthly $25 vouchers to purchase fruit and vegetables at a local store. They also participated in family nutrition education classes developed by Cooperative Extension nutrition experts, UC Davis graduate students, and local educators. Firebaugh school children received a school-based enhanced physical activity program and classroom nutrition education.

These programs, developed with grant funding by UC Davis, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed, UC CalFresh in California) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), have been adopted by Firebaugh’s schools for children in Pre-K through Third Grade.

Firebaugh community leaders also increased their awareness of local nutrition and physical activity needs and have begun to initiate environmental changes and policies to sustain the positive outcomes beyond the grant term. Recently, the Firebaugh City Council re-introduced a river walk/run—last held 20 years ago--to accompany their annual July Harvest Festival/ Cantaloupe Roundup.

For families whose children participated in the NSFS study, this event was a memorable moment to compete for their first medals in the three-kilometer race. Local growers and businesses donated bottled ice water and a sampling of their sweetest melons as healthy refreshments for all participants. Firebaugh City Council introduced a new incentive to vendors, who received a free booth for selling healthy foods and beverages. NSFS collaborated with the Children’s Corner Preschool to provide homemade fruit-infused ice water, whole wheat waffles with yogurt and fruit, and cantaloupe smoothies, a local theme-based favorite.

Participation in NSFS has had important long-term impact on the community of Firebaugh. Plans are now underway to extend the walking path that winds along the San Joaquin River and add a nature area to encourage families to enjoy these special community treasures.

City Council member and local physician, Dr. Marcia Sablan, commented, “The Firebaugh City Council has a goal of showcasing the healthy lifestyle available to our community. By extending the nature path, we will enable residents to walk or run along a riverside par course with interpretive signs designed to promote fitness-goal setting.”

Dr. Sablan added that while city leaders had been debating the trail expansion over many years, the commitment to supporting healthy lifestyles resulted from Firebaugh’s participation in NSFS.

July’s River Run and Walk drew more than 150 residents and visitors. In the wake of this success, Firebaugh is looking forward to holding a second activity event, the “Mud Run,” in the fall.

A young contestant receives official race badge at the newly revitalized Annual Firebaugh Harvest Festival/River Walk & Run in July of this year.
Avocado Salad
Serves 6 portions (Portion size: 1 ½ cups)

Ingredients:
6 cups of lettuce lechuga
3 chopped tomatoes
5 chopped green onions
1 small cucumber, peeled and chopped
1 large avocado

Instructions:
1. In a bowl, mix the lettuce, tomatoes, onions, cucumber.
2. Cut the avocado in half, take out the pit and skin.
3. Slice the avocado.
4. Place the slices on top of the lettuce.

Italian Dressing

Ingredients:
1/4 cup yogurt (unflavored)
1/4 cup mayonnaise (low fat)
1/4 cup milk (low fat)
1 teaspoon of Italian species - 1/2 (or 1/8 of a teaspoon of each: oregano, rosemary, marjoram, thyme)
1 garlic clove (crushed)

Instructions:
1. In a small pot, combine all ingredients.
2. Put on the lid and shake well.
3. Keep the jar covered and refrigerate for at least one hour prior to use.

Decorate boiled eggs!

1. In a small pan, mix 1 teaspoon of vinegar, 1/2 cup of hot water and 20 drops of food coloring.
2. Put the egg into the pan and use a spoon to add the color.

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