

Salud America!

The RWJF Research Network to
Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

Volume 6, Issue 2, Winter, 2014

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ideas and suggestions to
despres@uthscsa.edu.

Latino Kids Need Salud Heroes. Can You Step Up?



Can you be a Salud Hero?

Latino kids need Salud Heroes – people who start or contribute to a healthy change that can reduce obesity and related diseases.

Visit our new website, [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change](#), to get inspired by stories and videos about real-life [Salud Heroes](#) who are making healthy community changes – from improved marketing to increased access to healthy food and physical activity, etc. – for Latino kids in your neighborhood and across the nation.

For example:

- [San Antonio school district cooks up healthier concession stand menus](#): In a mostly Latino school district in San Antonio, a school board president drove a policy change to implement

healthier menu options — such as grilled chicken wraps — at concession stands during after-school events, like football games, for students and parents.

- [Houston doctor helps open a farmer's market at her clinic's front door](#): In a mostly Latino neighborhood in Houston that lacked access to fresh fruits and vegetables, a doctor worked with community members to create a unique method to bring healthy, affordable foods to clinic patients: a farmers' market right at the door of the doctor's office lobby.

You can also upload your own Salud Hero stories.

Be a Salud Hero today!



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, visit www.salud-america.org. The *Salud America!* E-newsletter is distributed quarterly to its national membership network.



Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

San Antonio is what the entire United States will look like in 40 years, some say.

That's good news, but not all good. San Antonio's large Latino population contributes immeasurably to the diverse culture and vitality of our city, just as the continued growth of the Latino population benefits our nation as a whole. At the same time, some families in our heavily Latino neighborhoods increasingly lack access to the kinds of neighborhood amenities that Americans rely upon to stay healthy, and face some obstacles to good health. These are challenges to health in all Latino cities across the country.

Research has found that, nationally, Latinos live in areas with more fast-food restaurants and unhealthy food advertising, and higher consumption of sugary beverages, per capita than whites and some other groups. Latinos also tend to have less access to parks and playgrounds, grocery stores, and healthy school snacks and after-school physical activity opportunities for children.

Not coincidentally, federal statistics show that Mexican American kids are 1.6 times more likely to be overweight than white children, and Mexican Americans are almost twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to be diagnosed with diabetes, and 50 percent more likely to die from it.

For these reasons, researchers have long pointed to obesity and diabetes as key health threats for the Latino community as a whole.

This month, this research was reinforced by [a new poll](#) by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Harvard School of Public Health, and *National Public Radio*.

In the poll, Latinos were asked about a wide range of issues in their lives and communities. When asked about the health issue that is the biggest problem for their families, diabetes came up most, among both immigrant and non-

immigrant Latinos. When asked to rate specific aspects of their communities, large numbers gave low marks in areas like housing, safety from crime, public transportation, and availability of facilities for exercise and sports.

Unfortunately, given what we know from research about Latino communities and health issues, this is not at all surprising.

Thankfully, there is a growing movement to advance policies that can reduce the prevalence of obesity and diabetes by making healthy food options more prevalent and expanding access to safe places for children and families to be active in their communities. And we are constantly learning more about which strategies are most effective.

For instance, we are [finding](#) that shared-use agreements, which enable schools' facilities to be used outside of normal school hours, can improve public access to places where it's easy to stay physically active, and may help young Latinos maintain a healthy weight. Recently, a shared-use agreement was put into effect in [Alice, Texas](#), a South Texas city in a county with an obesity rate of approximately 30 percent. Through a partnership with the school district, residents of the city are now able to use a range of school-owned facilities including gyms, trails, and playgrounds, as well as football and soccer fields.

In San Antonio, we are [finding](#) that policies are changing to improve the food environment and economy among Latinos. These "healthy food financing initiatives" can include tax credits, zoning incentives, funding, technical assistance, or equipment to spur supermarkets and farmers' markets to locate in underserved areas.

For instance, the city is offering a \$1 million incentive

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News Briefs

Bilingual Cookbook: Latinas' Recipes Get Healthy Makeover

Eating the right food can help fight cancer. But what foods are right? Are there such things as healthy – and tasty – traditional Latino dishes? Check out a new bilingual cookbook, [Nuestra Cocina Saludable: Recipes from Our Community Kitchen](#), to guide you and your family to eat healthy and help protect against cancer and other chronic diseases. The cookbook is from the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) – the team behind *Salud America!* – and the Cancer Therapy and Research Center (CTRC) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. The cookbook, available in in [English](#) or [Spanish](#), has 46 recipes for healthy, delicious foods straight from the kitchens of real Latinas in South Texas.



Funding

Grant Listings

RWJF, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR), have obesity-related funding opportunities that are seeking applications, or compile lists of funding opportunities.

[RWJF](#)

[NIH](#)

[NCCOR](#)

Salud Heroes

Learn more about Salud Heroes at the [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change website](#)



Giving Latina Teens a (Photo) Voice to Impact the Community

Two researchers have received \$250,000 to expand their work to empower Latina teens in New Britain, Conn., to photograph areas for improvement in their community and use the results to sway policymakers.



Robert Dudley



Jayme Hannay

The researchers, Drs. Robert Dudley and Jayme Hannay of the [Community Health Center, Inc.](#), are former grantees of *Salud America!*, a Latino childhood obesity research network funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and based at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

For *Salud America!*, Dudley and Hannay conducted a mid-course evaluation of their Healthy Tomorrows for Teens (HTT) obesity prevention and leadership training program.

They found that Photovoice, a photographic technique that empowers community members to identify a neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses, can be used to teach Latina teens about leadership, community engagement, and the importance of leading healthy lifestyles.

Now, thanks to the new five-year grant (2013-2018) from the Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program and through a partnership with the YWCA, six teen leaders and a facilitator will again use Photovoice to identify the positives and negatives in the environment.



Former *Salud America!* Grantees Robert Dudley and Jayme Hannay have received \$250,000 to expand their work to empower Latina teens — including those pictured above — in New Britain, Conn., to improve their community

Their work will serve to inform policymakers and key stakeholders during the planning process of a new YWCA teen center, called the House of Teens (HOT). The HOT will serve as both a center for primary care services and as hub to provide leadership and advocacy training to teens.

Dudley and Hannay say this ongoing use of Photovoice is helping develop a large network of empowered Latina teens.

“A program like Photovoice, offered multiple times and with different partners in a defined community like New Britain, eventually benefits from a natural affinity group or social network to sustain itself,” Hannay said.

Hannay said the financial support, training, and Photovoice research findings that *Salud America!* published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, were all critical for leveraging the new grant. One of the new student leaders, Anashlie Lopez, even is the cousin of a teen leader, Rose Burgos, who presented her Photovoice findings to the Common Council of New Britain as part of the *Salud America!* project.

Latino Student Cooks Up Healthy Dishes

Leon Sanchez, a Chicago high-school student inspired by his dying grandmother to cook, recently won the Cooking Up Change contest that challenges students to develop healthy school lunch meals that meet federal nutrition standards, according to a new [video](#) by the Kids' Safe & Healthful Foods (KSHF) Project, and a [blog post](#) by [PreventObesity.net](#) that feature Sanchez.

Sanchez and his teammates won the contest for Mexican-food-inspired dishes, including chicken rancheros and tropical de fruta.

The recipes have had a great impact on children's health.

“I wanted to make my grandmother proud, and make everyone who knows me proud,” Sanchez said in the video. “We are actually helping kids live a longer life.”

Learn more about Cooking Up Change [here](#).



Leon Sanchez (far right) and his teammates won the Cooking Up Change contest for their chicken rancheros recipe.

Research

Find the latest research and reports in Latino childhood obesity at the [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change website](#)



Childhood Obesity Rates Drop 43% in Past Decade

Obesity rates among children ages 2-5 dropped from 14% in 2003-04 to 8% in 2011-12, a decline of 43%, according to new federal data.

The data, from the CDC and published in the February 26 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, doesn't cite precise reasons for the decline.

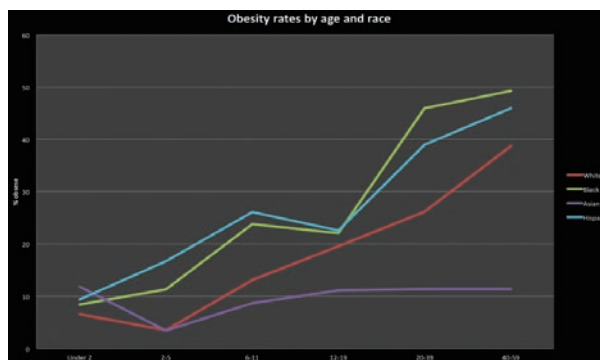
But it offers potential reasons:

- **Child care centers improving nutrition and fitness standards.**
- **Children are consuming fewer sugary drinks.**
- **And more women are breastfeeding, which can help stave off obesity in children.**

First Lady Michelle Obama—who on Feb. 25 announced [new proposed rules](#) to limit marketing of unhealthy foods in schools by phasing out advertising of sugary drinks and junk food and ensuring that other promotions in schools were in line with health standards—cited the efforts of [Let's Move](#) in making healthier habits the norm and reducing obesity.

Also, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) continues to fund efforts dedicated to reducing obesity and creating a [culture of health](#).

“After decades of seemingly endless bad news about obesity, our collective efforts over the last several years show that we as a nation are finally moving in the right direction,” said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, RWJF president and CEO.



But the new federal data wasn't all good.

According to the CDC report, older children made no progress, with nearly 18% of kids ages 6 to 11 remaining obese, as well as 20.5% of kids ages 12 to 19, according to a [USA Today report](#). Adult obesity rates were also the same or higher in some age groups.

And Latino children continue to have a higher rates of obesity/overweight (39.1%) than all kids (31.8%), according to recent data.

“We're excited to see signs of progress, but we have to continue our efforts to encourage health among Latino families, who are more at risk of obesity,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of the RWJF-funded [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change](#) website is a step in that direction.”

Director's Corner, continued from page 3 ►

for a grocer to build a store downtown, where there isn't a large supermarket. More and more restaurants are participating in the city's healthy menu labeling program. And recently, the city also worked with several *bodegas* (Latino-oriented corner stores) in so-called “food deserts” to provide refrigerators/freezers for free if the *bodega* owners would pay to stock them with fresh fruit and produce. One store owner, Sandra Gonzales of Nuevo Leon Meat Market, said offering fresh fruit and veggies has increased her store's profits: “[Customers] would rather stop by somewhere close to home, like Nuevo Leon. They come in and buy everything they need.”

Additionally, San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro also appointed a [Mayor's Fitness Council](#), which I am a member of, to work across public and private sectors to achieve improved health and fitness across the city. The

council has developed a program to empower students to promote healthy changes at their schools, conducted summits to bring together school officials around improving wellness policies, and trained residents to lead neighborhood walking groups throughout the city.

Changes like these are models for changes in other parts of the country.

We need to enhance and expand on efforts like these to stem the tide of diabetes and obesity among Latinos, thus ensuring that the future of America is healthy for a long, long time.

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio

Making Healthier Communities

Find the latest resources to create healthier communities at the [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change website](#)



Latino-Serving Corner Stores Get Healthier in Philadelphia



A customer at the Indiana Food Market gets a food demonstration and nutrition information from Maria Vanegas with The Food Trust about whole grain tortillas

It is hardest for minorities, like Latinos, in urban areas of the United States to purchase healthy foods close to home, according to a new study, [Saludify reports](#).

The team for the study, led by Dr. Carolyn Cannuscio of the University of Pennsylvania and published in the [American Journal of Preventative Medicine](#), interviewed nearly 500 people about their food shopping habits in West and Southwest Philadelphia.

They also accessed the quality and variety of food offerings at more than 370 stores – about 80% corner stores – in the area.

Most of the corner stores scored very low on the healthy food assessment.

Despite the fact that 90% of the residents in the area said the corner stores were the closest to their residence to shop, only one-third of those residents said they shop at corners stores and instead go further away from home to find healthy foods, according to the study.

There is hope for Philadelphia in the form of a rising popularity in farmers markets and [corner store initiatives](#), like the Healthy Corner Stores Network, that are reforming what healthy options will be available. [The Healthy Corner Stores Network](#)

is led by the Philadelphia health department and [The Food Trust](#). They enlist 650 of the 2,000 corner stores in Philadelphia to begin broadening their selections to include fresh produce, whole-grains, and low-fat dairy.

The city has invested about \$1.5 million into the program since 2010.

There are incentives for participating stores, with four levels ranging from \$100 grants to being given brand new mini-refrigerators or store front signs.

The Indiana Food Market is one example of a corner store that has been reformed to be in the top level of participation in the Healthy Corner Stores Network. They began offering more of the healthy selections and giving customers healthy nutrition information.

They now have a new colorful exterior, eye-catching produce refrigerator displays, and a special display for whole grains. They offer free English and Spanish pamphlets, recipes, and cooking demonstrations to customers, because they service a large Latino population.

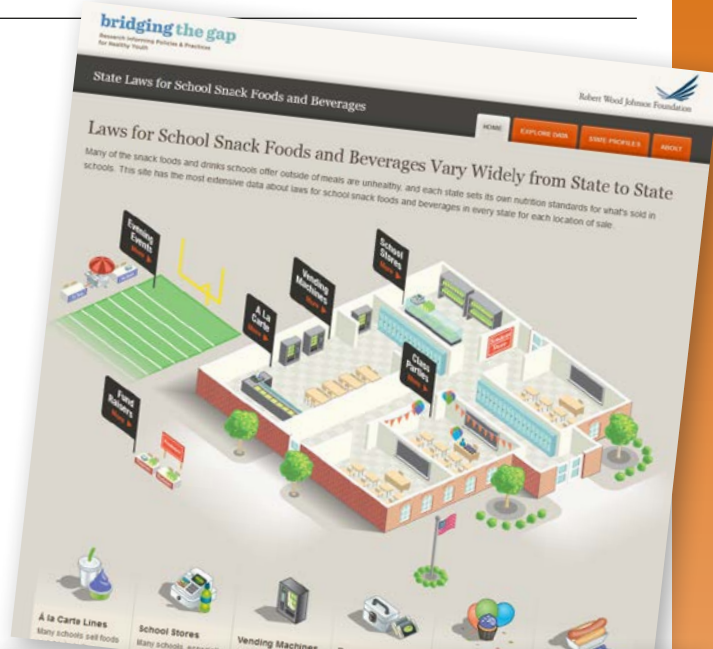
Read more [here](#) about the University of Pennsylvania study and find out more [here](#) about corner stores in Philadelphia.



Resources

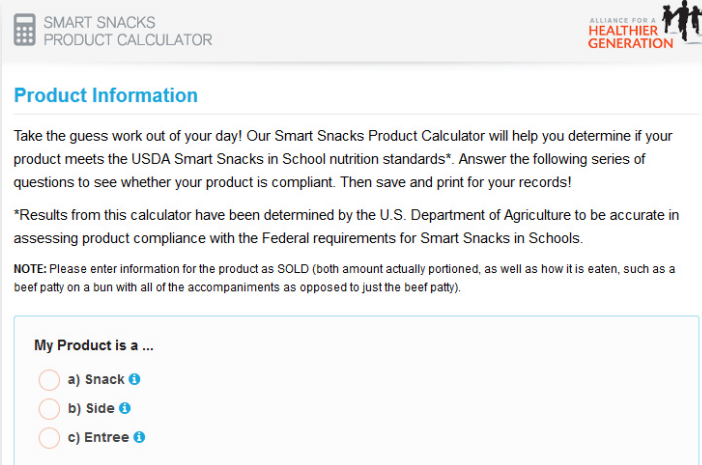
New Interactive Website on State Laws for School Snacks and Drinks

Bridging the Gap, an RWJF-funded national research program focused on understanding how policy and environmental factors affect the health of today's youth, has created the new interactive website about school snack foods and beverages **State Laws for School Snack Foods and Beverages**. The website covers laws in all fifty states over the course of seven school years and displays the information in colorful, easy to understand visuals.



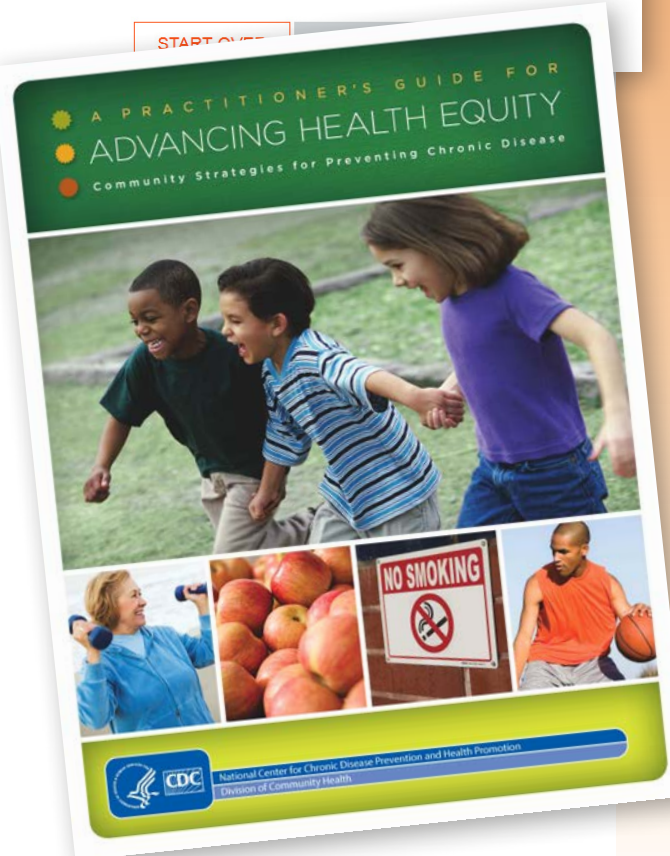
Is Your Snack 'Smart'? Check with a New Produce Calculator

The new **Smart Snacks Product Calculator**, from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, users can simply enter the product information, answer a few questions, and the calculator will determine whether your snack, side or entrée item meets the new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Smart Snacks in School Guidelines.



New Guide: How to Promote Better Health for All

A new tool, **A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity**, can help public health practitioners tackle community-level health inequities through policy, systems, and environmental improvements designed to enhance tobacco-free living, healthy eating, and active living among the underserved. The guide is from the Prevention Institute and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.



NFL and AHA create Mobile Fitness App to Get Youth Moving

The National Football League teamed up with the **American Heart Association** to create a mobile app that encourages fitness and physical activity, Prevent Obesity reports. **The NFL Play 60 app** requires players to run in place and jump through a course of parks, city, and street views.



Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.



**How a Latino Community
'Heals Itself'**



Eight Ways to Improve Your Park



Sugar's Effect on the Brain



**Inspiring Minorities
to be Doctors, Scientists**



**EMS Training Program
Diversifies the Workforce**



Share Your Story of Change

About the E-newsletter

This E-newsletter is produced quarterly by *Salud America!* Please send news items or story ideas to despres@uthscsa.edu.

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