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***Salud America!* Gets \$1.3M to Build Research, Education To Fuel Policy Changes that Reduce Latino Childhood Obesity**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (Feb. 2, 2015)—*Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children* has received a one-year, \$1.3 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to develop new evidence and educational content that empowers people to drive healthy policy changes for the health of Latino children.

Salud America! is a national online network of 10,000 parents, leaders, academics, and advocates.

The new funding allows the network, which first formed in 2007, to expand its membership and build new scientific evidence and policy recommendations to guide efforts to reduce obesity.

The network also will enhance its award-winning [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change website](#), launched in February 2014, with an interactive map and new campaigns, videos, and resources to help people make healthy changes in cities, schools, states and the nation.

“Latino childhood obesity remains a national health threat, but we believe our research and multimedia educational content will continue to motivate people to push for healthy changes in their areas,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, director of *Salud America!*, headquartered at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Latino children ages 2-19 are more obese/overweight (38.9%) than White (28.5%) and Black (35.2%) children, studies show. Latino children also face barriers to healthy food access and physical activity, and they are increasingly the target of unhealthy food marketing.

Salud America! aims to build the research, education, and materials needed to address these challenges and reverse the obesity epidemic among Latino children.

In its first few years, *Salud America!* created obesity-focused communication materials, developed the first-ever Latino research agenda, and funded 20 research grantees. Grantees found that guided grocery store trips, menu labeling at restaurants, and video-game-based exercise programs are among several promising, culturally appropriate ways to prevent obesity among Latino children, according to a [published collection of studies](#).

In 2013, *Salud America!* published research reviews and recommendations to fuel policy change in: [active play](#), [active spaces](#), [better food](#), [school snacks](#), [marketing](#) and [sugary drinks](#).

That research built a foundation for 2014’s [Growing Healthy Change website](#), a first-of-its-kind online platform with geo-located policy initiatives, resources for taking action, and “Salud Hero” videos that demonstrate the steps people took to make healthy changes. The website and its content been recognized by the AVA Digital Awards, 20th Annual Communicator Awards, Telly

Awards, Aurora Awards; Web Health Awards, HERMES Awards, Davey Awards, and W³ Awards from The Academy of Interactive and Visual Arts.

With the new funding, effective Feb. 1, 2015, to Jan. 31, 2016, *Salud America!* will:

- update the latest research in Latino childhood obesity;
- expand research into other Latino health issues;
- enhance Growing Healthy Change website content, including a revamped [policy map](#) where people can enter their address and see what's happening near them;
- launch new campaigns to engage people in reducing obesity;
- continue producing multimedia [Salud Heroes](#) stories of successful healthy changes; and
- expand in social media ([@SaludToday](#)) with [Tweetchats](#), contests, etc.

“This new funding will allow us to further expand our content-creation capabilities to empower more people to make healthy changes,” Ramirez said. “Our website and content will continue to be used by individuals and groups who choose to advocate directly for evidence-based governmental and corporate policies addressing Latino health.”

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For current news from the IHPR at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio, please visit our [blog](#) or follow us on Twitter [@SaludToday](#).

Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino researchers, policymakers and community leaders engaged in research and advocacy 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 Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease among certain populations, including Latinos, in South Texas and the nation. The IHPR, founded in 2006, uses evidence-guided research, training and community outreach to improve the health of those at a disadvantage due to race/ethnicity or social determinants. Visit the IHPR online at <http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu> or follow its blog at <http://www.saludtoday.com/blog>.