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***Salud America!* Gets \$1.5M to Develop Culturally Tailored Content to Fuel Healthy Changes that Reduce Latino Childhood Obesity**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (Feb. 28, 2017)—*Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children* has received a one-year, \$1.5 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to develop culturally tailored educational content and tools that empower people to work for policy changes to help Latino children grow up healthy.

Salud America!, established in 2007 and based at UT Health San Antonio, has a national online network of 100,000 parents, school and academic personnel, and community leaders who support its mission: “Promote a healthy weight for Latino children by communicating good health and driving people to start healthy changes in their schools and communities.”

The new funding will allow *Salud America!* to expand its network and engage members with enhanced educational content—multimedia role model stories, social media events, online resources, digital action campaigns, and marketing—geared toward healthy change. In addition to reducing Latino childhood obesity, *Salud America!* will expand work to improve Latino family support, mental health, and early childhood development.

“We are excited by RWJF’s ongoing support, and are excited to continue to push the boundaries of communication to empower Latino leaders and families toward developing healthy children with a healthy weight,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, director of *Salud America!*

More than 38 percent of Latino children ages 2-19 are overweight or obese, compared to 28.5 percent of White youth and 35.2 percent of Black youth. Latino children also face barriers in access to healthy foods and drinks, physical activity, social services, mental health care, and proper early childhood development.

Salud America! was established to address these challenges.

In its first few years, the program developed the first-ever coordinated [agenda for research](#) on Latino childhood obesity, funded 20 [research grantees](#) who identified promising obesity-prevention strategies, and created an award-winning [website](#) with multimedia content that has been recognized by the AVA Digital Awards, Communicator Awards, Telly Awards, Aurora Awards, Digital Health Awards, HERMES Awards, Davey Awards, and W³ Awards.

More recently the network has developed foundational research on obesity among Latino children and helped raise awareness of shared use agreements among state PTA organizations and healthier food marketing among state grocery store associations. The program also

developed [Salud Report Cards](#), a web tool with localized data and research on equity, obesity, grocery stores, parks, primary care, insurance, etc.

With the new funding, effective Feb. 15, 2017, to Feb. 14, 2018, *Salud America!* will:

Enhance its digital footprint. Launched in 2014, the [Salud America! website](#) maps the latest healthy changes, resources, and stories and videos of role models who've created change in cities, schools, states and the nation. The program will work with consultants to enhance the website and fuel targeted content aligning with early childhood development, mental health, and family and social support, in addition to our ongoing focus on [Better Food in the Neighborhood](#), [Active Spaces](#), [Healthier Schools](#), and [Healthy Weight by Kindergarten](#).

Develop new action campaigns. *Salud America!* will create new campaigns to encourage its network to take action and share information. Campaigns include grassroots systems-change experiments with community and school groups, video voting contests, member recognition awards, trainings, and more.

Expand communications. *Salud America!* will enhance engagement with its network in a variety of ways, including e-communication, social media posts (via [@SaludToday](#)), and social media events, such as the [#SaludTues tweetchats](#). These offerings will expand to include webinars, and geo-targeted social media awareness campaigns.

The program also will closely monitor its communications and evaluate its effect on developing change agents and motivating grassroots policy and environmental change.

"We believe our content will continue to connect with and empower Latinos to get involved in building a culture of health where everyone can live healthy lives," Ramirez said.

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

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

Salud America! is a nonprofit network launched in 2007 that develops multimedia communications to educate and motivate its national online network—more than 100,000 parents, teachers, academics, healthcare providers, and community leaders—to take action to reduce Latino childhood obesity and build a culture of health. The network was created and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and is directed by Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, a health disparities researcher and director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research at UT Health San Antonio. Visit *Salud America!* at <http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/salud-america/>. Follow *Salud America!* on social media via its [@SaludToday](#) handle on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [WordPress](#).

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#).