

# Salud America!

The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

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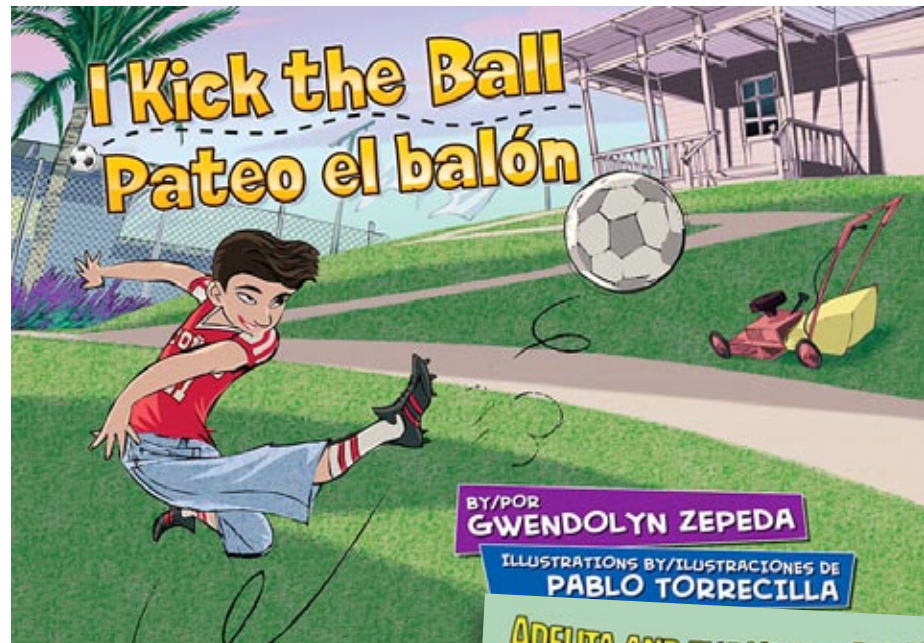
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## Free bilingual children's books teach healthy lifestyles to Latino kids



A Latino boy plays soccer and encourages kids to play and eat right.

A Latina girl and her classmates learn about "veggie cousins."

These are two storylines from the new *iSalud, familia!* children's book series, from Houston-based publisher Arte Público Press, in which young protagonists make choices about healthy eating and active lifestyles to reduce Latino childhood obesity and diabetes.

The free books are distributed free through community partners to low-income Hispanic families with school-aged children in both urban and rural areas across the United States.

"Childhood obesity and diabetes among Latinos are already at pandemic levels; we hope to positively influence Latino attitudes towards healthy lifestyles and nutrition at the grass-roots and policy



levels," said Nicolás Kanellos, director of Arte Público Press. "These books will feature attractive visual imagery that appeals to Latino cultural sensibilities and traditions."

The series' first book was *I Kick the Ball / Pateo el balón* by Gwendolyn Zepeda.

In the book, released in September, a boy uses his imagination and healthy sensibilities to be a skillful soccer player—

Continued on page 6 ►



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](http://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

Part of my job as director of *Salud America!* is to tell our story to other audiences—to help drive the nationwide momentum that will be needed to reverse the epidemic of obesity among Latino children.



Amelie Ramirez

Over the last few months I've had the chance to do that with members of our RWJF family, including Healthy Eating Research and Leadership for Healthy Communities, with other national organizations, and even at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association with several *Salud America!* colleagues, including Larry Green, Emma Sanchez, Shari Barkin and Cristina Barroso.

Whenever I'm at the podium, my message usually starts with an issue overview.

Currently, 38.2 percent of Hispanic children ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese, compared with 31.7 percent of all children those ages. This alone highlights the great need for research and policy development focused on reversing the epidemic this population.

I then cover the many ways *Salud America!* is trying to make a difference, including the innovative work being done by our pilot investigators. Our pilots are doing evidence-based research that will inform new policies across the nation.

We're hoping to spotlight their efforts soon in research briefs and videos.

As always, please be sure to stay tuned and frequently check our [Web site](#) for updates on our and [others'](#) efforts to address Latino childhood obesity.

#### Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.

Director, *Salud America!*

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



## News Briefs

### Leaders Discuss Latino Childhood Obesity Issues at 2nd *Salud America!* Summit

*Salud America!* has released a [report](#) on its 2nd Annual Scientific Summit. The summit, held last fall in San Antonio, discussed Latino childhood obesity and showcased the progress being made by the program's 20 pilot investigators to reverse the epidemic. Laura Leviton, RWJF special advisor for evaluation, Mildred Thompson, deputy director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity and Judith Ottoson, independent evaluation consultant, were among some of the other speakers at the summit.



### Moms, Daughters Participate in Triathlon in Houston

*Salud America!* pilot investigator Dr. Norma Olvera of the University of Houston is assessing the immediate and long-term impacts of a mom-daughter healthy lifestyles intervention on reducing adiposity indicators and increasing the amount of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity Latina girls get. Called BOUNCE (Behavior Opportunities Uniting in Nutrition, Counseling, and Exercise), the program aims to encourage activity and healthy eating among Latina mothers and daughters. Recently, several BOUNCE moms and daughters participated in a triathlon (swim four laps, spin 13 miles and run 1 mile). "It was really inspiring to see mothers, daughters and siblings working as a team to complete events," said Dr. Olvera. "We had one mother who had not been able to climb stairs or run for the past 12 years, and completed 13 spinning miles. She was so happy. It was truly unbelievable to witness mothers becoming so excited realizing that they were able to do what they did."



## Funding Opportunities

### Grant Listings

RWJF and the National Institutes of Health have obesity-related research funding opportunities that are currently seeking applications. In addition, the National Collaborative for Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) collects and displays grant opportunities from other organizations in the field.

#### [RWJF Calls for Proposals](#)

#### [NIH Obesity Grants](#)

#### [NCCOR Obesity Grants](#)

### Active Living Research Grants

Active Living Research, another RWJF national program, is seeking [proposals](#) for studies of emerging or anticipated changes in physical activity-related policies or environments. Grants are awarded on a rolling basis. Letters of intent may be submitted until July 1, 2011.

### Healthy Eating Research

Healthy Eating Research, an RWJF national program, will award \$2.35 million for three types of [grants](#) that aim to provide key decision-makers with evidence to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. Varying application deadlines start on March 10, 2011.



## Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

### San Antonio School District Revamps School Nutrition Efforts

Students at Northside Independent School District cafeterias in San Antonio are noticing changes as they choose their food.

New options are fresh fruit bowls, veggies, salads, lean meats and whole-grain rolls.

Gone are white-flour breads, high-fat cheese, fried food and sodas.

Even the cafeteria name is gone—"café" has taken its place.

The Northside Child Nutrition Department has spent \$1.5 million over the last two years to provide more fresh fruits and salads, and new entrée options with less sodium and fat, in order to improve access to [healthy foods](#).

Northside serves more than 100,000 meals per day at 100 school cafeterias.

"If you take this food away from the cafeteria, you would think it was restaurant-quality food," Thomas Wherry, director of the Northside Child Nutrition Department, said on the district's Web site. "The foods we buy are good quality, similar to what you would find at H-E-B or better."

Even typical cafeteria fare has new makeovers at Northside. Pizza, for example, is made with a whole grain crust and low-fat cheese; enchiladas are made with low-fat cheese and served with oil-free Spanish rice; corn dogs are made with turkey; and the hamburger is 86 percent lean ground



Northside Independent School District child nutrition officials have Northside NIC, a chimp on a mission to teach elementary students how to eat right and exercise. Watch more [here](#) or click the video.

beef and served on a whole wheat bun.

Going beyond just food changes, the district has made marketing changes.

Signage touting healthy choices line café walls, and a mascot—Northside NIC (Nutrition Instructional Chimp)—teaches students about proper nutrition, portion sizes, and exercise. NIC is so popular that the district plans to buy a second mascot suit.

Across the school district, the number of meals students are consuming is up by 5 percent. The nutrition department is making enough money from the new sales that it does not rely on school district funding.

Celeste Crabtree, the cafeteria manager at Jay High School, said her cafeteria sells 1,800 lunches a day—up from 1,000 five years ago.

"When I came here the food was totally different," said Crabtree, noting teriyaki chicken strips, chicken tenders, and cheese enchiladas as popular choices now. "I was skeptical when they changed the breakfast menu, but now the kids have so many more choices."

#### Salud America! NAC

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#### ► Randy Schwartz

Mary Story  
Elsie Taveras  
Mildred Thompson  
Amy Lazarus Yaroch

## Meet the National Advisory Committee (NAC)

As senior vice president of strategic health initiatives for the American Cancer Society's New England Division, Randy Schwartz oversees cancer control and prevention, advocacy, patient support and other programs in the six-state region.

The job is all about improving people's health.

But Schwartz says he wouldn't be in position to promote health to so many people without help from mentors, colleagues and professional organizations.

"Key people, such as Larry Green, chairman of the *Salud America!* National Advisory Committee, and his colleague, Marshall Kreuter, and their work have shaped my career in health promotion," Schwartz



Randy Schwartz

said. "In addition, involvement with many great colleagues and organizations, such as the Society for Public Health Education, has added to a 'social capital' of professional engagement in health promotion and education."

Schwartz has vast experience implementing community health promotion initiatives and using policy advocacy as a key way to promote health.

Before joining ACS in 2000, he spent nearly two decades in health promotion and community/family health at the Maine Department of Human Services. He also led the Maine Diabetes Control Project, which is widely recognized for its pioneering work in third-party coverage for diabetes self-management education.

He also serves on many editorial boards and expert panels, including the *Salud America!* National Advisory Committee.

"I haven't specifically focused on Latino health, but I was driven to be involved in the program because of my experience at the state health department and implementing policy strategies with health organizations' community constituents," he said.

Schwartz said he's impressed by the progress *Salud America!*, its leader Dr. Amelie Ramirez and its pilot researchers have made in examining Latino childhood obesity.

"It is my hope that the pilot projects demonstrate health promotion strategies and actions that can be duplicated and implemented in a more widespread way to impact this epidemic," he said. "The next generation depends on work like this."

## Research

### National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research Launches Surveillance Resource

*[The following is a press release from the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research announcing the launch of its Catalogue of Surveillance Systems.]*

The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) recently announced the launch of a new, free [online resource](#) to help researchers and practitioners more easily investigate childhood obesity in America.

NCCOR's Catalogue of Surveillance Systems describes in detail existing surveillance systems that collect data related to childhood obesity. It provides one-stop access to more than 75 surveys and other data sets, allowing users to search and select surveys that provide a wealth of data at the national, state, and local levels on a range of variables, including school policies and health outcomes, as well as eating and exercise behaviors. Health officials at the city and state level also can find data related to their programs.

Using the Catalogue, researchers can:

- identify surveillance systems to meet their research and program needs;
- compare attributes across systems;



- find information about the systems; and
- link directly to the systems to download data or other information.

“NCCOR’s Catalogue of Surveillance Systems is a valuable tool for any researcher focused on childhood obesity,” said NIH Director, Dr. Francis Collins.

“Searching for information on data in these systems now takes a matter of minutes rather than hours, or even days. It is also now possible to see which data systems can be linked in order to study these health behaviors at the individual and

environmental levels.”

The Catalogue of Surveillance Systems is available [here](#).

To register for upcoming webinars on Catalogue features and uses, send an [e-mail](#).

NCCOR is a collaboration among the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and United

States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to accelerate progress on reversing the epidemic of childhood obesity in the United States. Through the collective efforts of these organizations, NCCOR aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of research on childhood obesity.

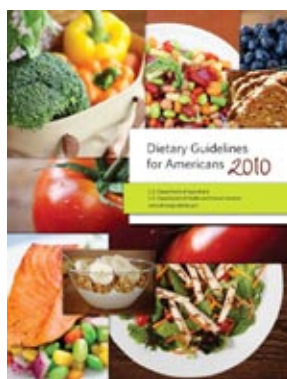
In addition to the Catalogue of Surveillance Systems, NCCOR plans to launch a second online tool soon, which will allow researchers to search for available survey instruments and questionnaires they can use in their own studies.



## Research Briefs

### New Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Kathleen Sebelius recently announced the release of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the evidence-based [nutritional guidance](#) to promote health, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity through improved nutrition and physical activity. Because more than one-third of children and more than two-thirds of U.S. adults are overweight or obese, the 7th edition of Dietary Guidelines for Americans places stronger emphasis on reducing calorie consumption



and increasing physical activity. “The 2010 Dietary Guidelines are being released at a time when the majority of adults and one in three children is overweight or obese and this is a crisis that we can no longer ignore,” said Secretary Vilsack. “These new and improved dietary recommendations give individuals the information to make thoughtful choices of healthier foods in the right portions and to complement those choices with physical activity.

The bottom line is that most Americans need to trim our waistlines to reduce the risk of developing diet-related chronic disease. Improving our eating habits is not only good for every individual and family, but also for our country.”

## Policy & Built Environment Corner

### Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Green Access and Equity in Orange County

The California-based City Project's new policy report, *Healthy Parks, Schools and Communities: Green Access and Equity in Orange County*, aims to promote equal access to parks and recreation.

Nearly one quarter of the land in Orange County is green space, an average of 41 acres per 1,000 residents. "Green space" refers to all parks, natural open spaces, beaches, school fields, trails and recreational facilities that provide places for physical activity.

However, there are disparities in access to green space.

The communities with the worst access to parks tend to be disproportionately populated by people of color and lower income, particularly in North Orange County.

In Santa Ana, for example, the green space ratio is only 1.85 acres per 1,000 residents.

People are 38 percent more likely to exercise when they live within one mile of a park. In Orange County, where 72 percent of Latino adults are overweight or obese, and 67 percent of fifth grade students failed to meet California Department of Education physical fitness standards in 2008, increasing access to parks and other green space can be an effective solution to improving public health and reducing healthcare costs.

"Research shows that when children are physically active, they tend to do better in school, are healthier, and are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors," said Seth Strongin, Policy and Research Manager for The City Project and co-author of the report.

"Spending time in nature can reduce stress and enhance mental wellbeing. Green space is also linked to a community's economic vitality. Improving green space



can increase property values and business revenue, in addition to providing green jobs."

"The inequities in open space availability in Santa Ana have had an adverse health and social impact on Santa Ana residents," said America Bracho, CEO & President of Latino Health Access (LHA). "The City Project's report on Orange County provides concrete research that Latino Health Access can use in our advocacy work to increase resources for open space and explore cost-sharing strategies such as joint-use agreements that allow our residents to use school grounds as parks after school hours – steps that are necessary to improve community health and equity in the City of Santa Ana."

The report uses geographic, demographic, economic and historical data to map and analyze access to the region's green space. In addition, the report examines access to green space based on income, race or ethnicity.

The report also describes the benefits that could be reaped in "park poor" and low-income communities if public funding resources were prioritized to alleviate disparities in access to green space. It concludes with policy recommendations for equitable investments in green space in Orange County, and throughout California and the nation.

"Children of color disproportionately live in communities of concentrated poverty without enough places to play in parks and schools, and without access to cars or adequate transit to reach parks and school fields in other neighborhoods," according to Robert García, Executive Director, Counsel, and Founder of The City Project, and also a member of the *Salud America!* National Advisory Committee.

Read the report in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).



### News Brief

#### Report: Supporting

#### Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in U.S. Elementary Schools

A comprehensive new [report](#) from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Bridging the Gap program finds that elementary schools

commonly offer their students junk food and soda, serve meals that are high in fat, and provide little time for physical education or recess. Findings are based on surveys of school administrators during the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years. Researchers also found that many schools have not implemented wellness policy provisions required by the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. That legislation called for school districts participating in federal child nutrition

programs to adopt and implement a wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006–07 school year. The report, *School Policies and Practices to Improve Health and Prevent Obesity: National Elementary School Survey Results*, serves as a follow-up to the executive summary which was released this summer. Its findings are important for informing the Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation, including policies related to competitive foods and school meals.



## Free books teach kids healthy lifestyles

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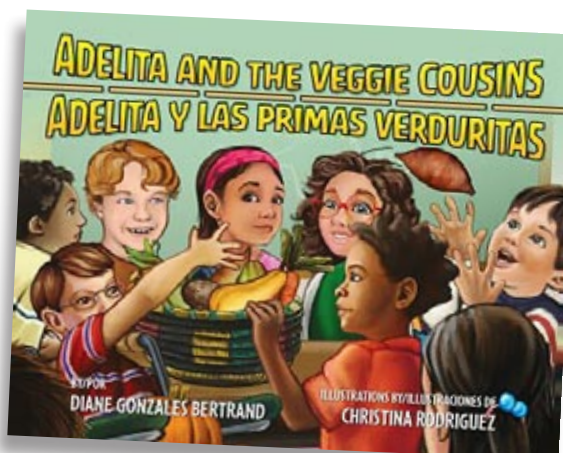
and also encourages kids to exercise and eat right.

More than 150,000 copies have been distributed in more than a dozen states.

Arte Público Press supplies free *iSalud, familia!* books to partners that incorporate the books into their programming and use their individual networks, such as *promotores*, to distribute the books. Partner organizations vary in nature and scope, including migrant centers, health clinics, food pantries, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community groups.

“The most important actors in this chain are the *promotores* working at the grass-roots level, who distribute the books to families with school-aged children,” Kanellos said.

Each book is developed “to assist community educators and advocates to use them in the most strategic ways



possible,” Kanellos said.

“The back covers equip parents and teachers with recipe, food shopping and activity tips, among others, that encourage healthy lifestyle and nutrition choices,” he said.

The series’ new book, *Adelita and the Veggie Cousins / Adelita y las primas verduras* by Diane Gonzales Bertrand, follows Adelita and her classmates as they learn how fun and

familiar vegetables can be.

More books are in development.

Interested partners should email the [program](#). For more information, visit the book program [Web site](#).

The *iSalud, familia!* book series is funded by the Marguerite Casey Foundation, The California Endowment, The Simmons Foundation, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation, with support from the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

### About the E-newsletter

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## Kids’ Health Q&A

**Question:** How does busy *Salud America!* pilot investigator Dr. Cristina Barroso keep her own daughter healthy and physically active?

I have a 5-year-old daughter, Huitzillin (“hummingbird” in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs). Since her birth, I have taught her about active living and healthy eating.

She’s forced me to truly practice what I preach. She learns about health and health practices from observing me. Hence, I removed the TV from my bedroom when, as a 3-year old, she did not understand why she couldn’t have a TV in her bedroom.

We enroll together in dance classes (ballet, hip hop, salsa and tap) to engage in structured physical activity. We have performed in two dance recitals.



*Salud America!* Pilot Investigator Dr. Cristina Barroso (at right) gets into the act when trying to instill healthy habits in her young daughter, Huitzillin (at left).

We also limit the amount of unhealthy food we have in our home.

So from a very early age she has known: las paletas pican los dientes (lollipops cause cavities), everyone has to exercise, and fruits and vegetables make you strong.

For other ideas on how parents can instill healthy lifestyle behaviors in their children, check out [these tips](#) from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.