

## Inside This Issue

**Page 2:** Director's Corner,  
News & Funding

**Page 3:** Salud Heroes

**Page 4:** Research

**Page 5:** Making Healthier  
Communities

**Page 6:** Video Roundup

## Find Us Online



## Got a News Item?

Send news items, story  
ideas and suggestions to  
[despres@uthscsa.edu](mailto:despres@uthscsa.edu).

# Competitive Sports for Latino Students in Public Elementary Schools



In Texas, public school students can join competitive sports teams starting in 7th grade through high school, giving them an outlet for physical activity.

But what about younger kids who want to play sports?

Samuel Karns, a teacher/coach at Westwood Elementary School in Houston, which is 81% Latino, had an idea to bring intramural sports and after-school fitness activities to students.

He brought his idea to district leaders. They asked him to start small.

So he started a traveling basketball performance group. Then he got a grant that allowed him to train youths how to properly train for and run 5K races.

Then Karns made his big move.

Working with the school principal, district wellness director, and the

city parks and recreation department, he launched a no-cost, after-school intramural league in which students at his elementary school play against each other during afterschool or Saturday-morning games.

Volunteers help run the program. Students learn a new sport each 6 weeks, like flag football, basketball, volleyball, and soccer. They practice once a week, with games every other Saturday.

Karns is now trying to expand the program into other elementary schools.

“My whole philosophy is keeping the kids active and to really provide them with opportunities that they probably wouldn’t get,” he said, “because no one else would do it.”

Read the full story [here](#).

[Go here](#) to learn what’s going on in active play for Latino kids in your area.



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

Good news is happening in the obesity fight: Rates have fallen among low-income kids in several states, rates have plateaued among girls, and targeted efforts in some states have reduced childhood obesity rates.

Yet major problems remain.

Obesity-related diseases continue to cause substantial costs and human suffering, while disparities in obesity rates are widening among Latinos and other groups.

With such a big need for solutions, a new report highlights some of the most innovative programs to prevent and treat obesity.

The report, [The Current State of Obesity Solutions in the United States](#), is the result of a 2014 workshop by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Roundtable on Obesity Solutions.

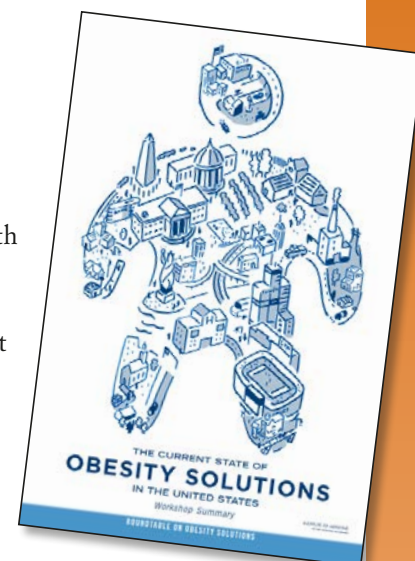
The roundtable formed to engage leadership from multiple

sectors—public health, health care, government, the food industry, education, philanthropy, the nonprofit sector, and academia—to address the obesity crisis.

I am among the members of this group, as a representative of the [Institute for Health](#)

[Promotion Research](#) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and [Salud America!](#), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded research network on Latino childhood obesity.

I hope you will [read the report](#) and learn more about the fight against obesity.



## News Briefs

### Join in *Salud America!* Tweetchats

*Salud America!* is co-hosting Tweetchats on Twitter on various Latino child health and obesity topics. To participate in future chats, follow our Twitter handle [@SaludToday](#) and search the hashtag [#GrowingHealthyChange](#). Check out recaps of our recent Tweetchats on [Better Food in Latino Neighborhoods](#) and [Active Spaces and Latino Kids](#).

### Program Names New Health & Society Scholars

During its annual meeting May 6-9, 2014, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholars program announced the selection of [12 new scholars](#) who will investigate how connections among biological, genetic, behavioral, social, economic, and environmental conditions impact the population's health. During their time in the program, [Health & Society Scholars](#) participate in intensive seminars, produce scholar-directed research and analysis, and receive focused training in the skills necessary for effective leadership, program implementation, and policy change. The Health & Society Scholars program is overseen by a [national advisory committee](#) of individuals from various disciplines and experiences related to population health. *Salud America!* Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez serves on the committee, which guides program policy, reviews scholar applications, and assists in monitoring site performance.

## 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.

[RWJF](#)

[NIH](#)

[NCCOR](#)



Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez participates in the annual meeting of the RWJF Health & Society Scholars.

## Salud Heroes

Learn more about Salud Heroes at the **Salud America! Growing Healthy Change** website



### Farmer's Market Opens in Houston Doctor's Office

In Houston, Texas, where nearly half the population is Latino, community health clinics are where many low-income families receive medical attention and yearly check-ups. The neighborhoods around these clinics tend to lack access to fresh fruits and vegetables. A primary care doctor worked with community members and created a unique method to bring healthy, affordable foods to clinic patients: A farmers' market right at the door of the doctor's office lobby. Read more [here](#).



### Veggies for a Latino Meat Market in San Antonio, Texas

Jalapenos, cilantro, garlic—"The Mexican culture cooks a lot of vegetables in meals and everything has to be hot," said Sandra Gonzales. Sandra and her brother, Rudy Gonzales, made sure to stock those good-for-cooking-spicy-meals vegetables in the Nuevo Leon Meat Market in San Antonio's predominantly Latino Westside, which Rudy has owned and operated for nearly a decade. Read more [here](#).



### Affordable Housing + Recreation = Healthy Colonias

A housing agency advocate, fueled by locally targeted research and focus groups of homeowners, created a policy to include sidewalks, hike/bike trails, and a playground for an affordable housing neighborhood in a *colonia*, an impoverished, highly Hispanic region of South Texas. *Colonias* tend to lack sidewalks, street lights, places for recreation, and running water. Read more [here](#).



## Research

Find the latest research and reports in Latino childhood obesity at the ***Salud America! Growing Healthy Change*** website



# Infographic: Kids Suffer Unequal Access to Safe Places to Play

Kids in predominantly minority or low-income neighborhoods are less likely to have clean, safe, and attractive places to be physically active.

They are also at higher risk for obesity and related health problems.

A [new infographic](#) from our friends at Active Living Research features evidence on some of the barriers these kids face in being able to walk, bike, or play in their schools and neighborhoods. Barriers include a lack of recreational facilities, broken or uneven sidewalks, inadequate time for recess, and higher rates of automobile crashes and crime.

Fortunately, all of these problems can be addressed with better policies, infrastructure improvements, and planning that can make neighborhoods safer, cleaner, and better designed for walking, biking, and playing.

Find resources and tools from [Active Living Research](#) and the [Salud America! Growing Healthy Change website](#), which are both funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



## Fact Sheet: Latino Childhood Obesity Rates Remain Significantly High

While obesity rates may be leveling off for some, rates among Latino youth remain significantly high, according to a [new fact sheet](#).

The fact sheet, from Leadership for Healthy Communities, indicates that Latino children and adolescents are more likely to be overweight and obese than their White peers, due to limited availability of healthy foods and safe recreational facilities that contribute to unhealthy environments for Latino families.

Factors such as acculturation and unhealthy food and beverage marketing play a role in higher rates of overweight and obesity among Latino youths.

"Comprehensive solutions, which include increasing access to affordable healthy foods in communities and schools, limiting the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages, addressing neighborhood safety, and improving the built environment, are necessary to prevent childhood obesity and safeguard the health of Latino children and adolescents," the fact sheet concludes.



## Making Healthier Communities

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



## New Spanish Website Aims to Mobilize Mothers to Take Action on Women's Issues

Check out the new *MamásConPoder* [website](#) for Spanish-speaking and bilingual members of MomsRising, a nonprofit advocacy group that educates the public and mobilizes grassroots action for critical women's issues.

MomsRising is an on-the-ground and online multicultural organization of more than a million members and more than 100 aligned organizations working to increase family economic security, to end discrimination against women and mothers, and to build a nation where both businesses and families can thrive.



MomsRising is also a new media outlet with more than 1,000 bloggers and a combined estimated blogging and social media readership reach to over 3 million people.

Read more about the new *MamásConPoder* campaign in this [blog post](#).

## New Double-Up Program Hits New York Farmers' Markets

More programs that double Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at local farmers' markets are coming to communities everywhere.

In New York, where almost 20% of residents are Latino, a [Double Up Food Bucks](#) program is spreading across the western half of the state, *The Buffalo News* [reports](#).

The idea is simple. When a SNAP recipient swipes their card at the farmers' market EBT machine, they are given tokens worth double their dollar amount for folks to use on fresh, healthy foods.

Double Up Food Bucks are limited to fruits and vegetables sold by participating farmers at designated farm markets, said Lisa Tucker, co-founder and executive director of the [Field & Fork Network](#) and food systems educator with [Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County](#).

"We're hoping that instead of spending their SNAP benefits at the corner store on pop and chips that people will go to the farmers' market," Tucker said, "and not only will they double their money, but they'll buy fresh fruits and vegetables."

The specific seven markets were chosen because they have a significant percentage of shoppers on SNAP assistance, including senior citizens, the disabled, the

unemployed and the underemployed, and already had EBT machines set up.

A total of \$364 million in SNAP benefits went to residents in the three Western New York counties where Double Up Food Bucks is being launched, said Cheryl Thayer, who also helped launch the program in the region.

"We're hoping to expand into more markets and more counties next year," Thayer said. "Ultimately, we'd like to see the program go statewide."



Photo via The Buffalo News

## Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.

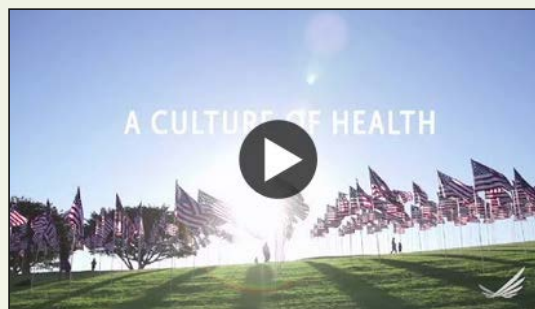
### Latino Areas Names Among 'Culture of Health' Award Winners

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Culture of Health Prize honors communities which place a high priority on health and bring partners together to drive local change, and are among the nation's most innovative efforts to build a culture of health.

Six communities, selected from more than 250 across the nation, received a no-strings attached \$25,000 cash prize.

The 2014 winners are:

- **Brownsville, TX.** Brownsville is highly successful in promoting active lifestyles and demonstrates the strength of community partnerships in action.
- **Taos Pueblo, NM.** The Taos Pueblo community of northern New Mexico is drawing on its cultural traditions to address modern challenges.
- **Williamson, WV.** In the heart of central Appalachia coal country, Williamson is committed to improving health and expanding economic development.



- **Durham County, NC.** To build a healthier community, Durham County is harnessing locally driven revitalization efforts to address the many factors that impact health.
- **Buncombe County, NC.** By creating a broad collaboration of community partners, Buncombe County is on a path to long-term and sustainable change.
- **Spokane County, WA.** Recognizing the powerful impact education has on long-term health, Spokane is improving health by expanding educational opportunities that empower young people.

These communities are beacons of hope and progress for healthier people and families.



**Does Where You Live Affect How Long You Live?**



**Latino Kids Need Salud Heroes. Can You Step Up?**



**Sugary Drink Tax: It's Going To Work**



**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](mailto:despres@uthscsa.edu).

Editor: Cliff Despres

Design: Jeffrey Heinke Design

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

Principal Investigator,  
Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

The Institute for Health Promotion Research  
The University of Texas Health Science Center  
at San Antonio

(210) 562-6500 [IHPR.uthscsa.edu](http://IHPR.uthscsa.edu)

*Salud America!* 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, [click here](#). To learn more about the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's efforts to combat childhood obesity, [click here](#).