

Immokalee cooperative program ties health, well-being to the arts

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IMMOKALEE — Immokalee wants to promote awareness and understanding of health care through the arts.

Florida State University, in partnership with other agencies, plans to promote the use of community-based arts in a rural area that is scarce of art to improve access to health care, community involvement, health literacy and education, and disease prevention.

"Our hope is that through the different art programs we will increase access to health care, as well as enhance the community's health and health literacy," said Javier Rosado, assistant professor of Florida State's College of Medicine.

The Arts in Health-care for Rural Communities initiative is a collaborative effort of the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Shands Arts in Medicine, the University of Florida Center for the Arts in Health-care and several Immokalee community agencies, including Florida State's College of Medicine, CHS Health-care (Collier Health Services), the Collier County Health Department, The Alliance for the Arts, and the United Arts Council of Collier County.

"We want to use art to educate the community of health issues while improving their health," Rosado said.

The program, which could start as early as January, hopes to offer weekly community-based programs, such as drawing, ceramics, improvisational theatre, tai chi, choral singing, dance and Zumba. Artists will work with individual patients and caregivers in hospitals, clinics and senior centers.

The program will tackle serious health problems, including childhood and adult obesity.

A Zumba program for both children and their parents would be offered to the community. Currently, there is a Zumba program for Collier Health Services employees.

Zumba classes are held at Florida State's College of Medicine health education site at 1441 Heritage Blvd. in Immokalee. This is a joint campus with Collier Health Services.