

Neapolitan

GULF LIFE | CLASSIFIED

■ **Seeing is believing:** Mobile eye lab makes its debut with plans to improve students' vision. **100**

Monday, September 15, 2013



COLIN HACKLEY (3)



Clockwise from top: Salud Immokalee participants work out with Zumba instructor Samantha Molina. Physical activities included soccer and Zumba.

Salud Immokalee participant Freddy Sanchez enjoys playing soccer with other participants under the direction of Coach Manuel Preciado.

Dr. Javier Rosado, a Florida State University College of Medicine assistant professor and psychologist at Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida, answers a question on bullying during a classroom discussion on self-image.

Making role models

New health program brought together kids and their parents to learn good nutrition — and a little Zumba

By Kaydee Tuff and Ron Hartung
Daily News Contributors

No sooner had the ink dried on Dr. Javier Rosado's study of obesity in Immokalee than he transformed from academic observer into anti-obesity coach.

In his paper last March in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, the Florida State University College of Medicine assistant professor and psychologist at Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida concluded: "Interventions are needed that address both childhood obesity and parent weight status among Latino migrant farmworkers."

He didn't wait for someone else to provide those interventions. For Rosado, clinical training director for psychology at the FSU College of Medicine's Health Education Site, the people of this migrant-rich community are not just research subjects; they're his neighbors.

With the support of the FSU College of Medicine, University of Florida IFAS-Extension Family Nutrition Program, and Immokalee Arts in Health, Rosado assembled

a team of medical personnel, nutrition educators, a soccer coach and a Zumba instructor to create "Salud Immokalee," a yearlong multidisciplinary program. It's designed to help youngsters and their parents make healthy lifestyle choices.

STARTING EARLY

The concept of managed health care is the core mission of the Healthcare Network, which provides primary medical and dental care to more than 45,000 patients annually at 13 locations throughout Collier County. Recently the Network expanded its behavioral health services through a partnership with FSU.

Unlike Little League or ballet lessons, Salud Immokalee includes an educational component on the dangers of obesity and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. The program targeted 30 Healthcare Network pediatric patients ages 6-11 with a body mass index at or above the 95th percentile.

Most of these children already have high cholesterol, high blood pressure and are already at risk for developing diabetes. Without intervention, they face a lifetime of poor health.

To be effective, the program had to take root in the home. In his study, Rosado surveyed each parent's understanding of obesity and found that initially, most were not overly concerned about their child's weight, thinking they would outgrow the problem.

He said culture can also influence parental perceptions of weight.

"In the Latino culture, mothers have a preference for plumper children, associate thinness with poor health, and may fail to perceive their children as overweight," he said.

Many parents did not connect chronic health concerns, such as asthma, to obesity. Once made aware of the consequences, the majority of the parents agreed to adjust diet and increase physical activity, not only for the overweight child, but the entire family.

"What we want to do is change behavior," said Rosado. "Research shows us that it takes at least 12 months of consistent contact to really make an impact. Once these kids know how to take control of their health and weight, with the support of their

See 'SALUD IMMOKALEE', 2D

**GET
OUT**
AND PLAN
YOUR DAY



SUNDAY: Enjoy a chamber ensemble concert from members of the Naples Philharmonic: Woodwind Quintet, 1:30 p.m., Golisano Children's Museum of Naples, 15080 Livingston Road, Naples; Philharmonic Brass Quintet, 2 p.m., Artis—Naples, 5833 Pelican Bay Blvd., Hayes Hall lobby, Naples; and Mozart String Quartet and Onslow String Quartet, 2 p.m., Naples United Church of Christ, 5200 Crayton Road, Naples. Free. 239-597-1900

MONDAY: This is not your ordinary stroll on the beach. It's a "Walk on the Wild Side," a one-mile guided hike along Black Island Trail, at 10 a.m. in Lovers Key State Park, 8700 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach. \$4, single-occupant vehicles; \$8, vehicles with two to eight people; \$2, pedestrians and cyclists. Registration required.

'SALUD IMMOKALEE'

from 1D

parents, they'll be empowered to live healthier lives."

TRIPLE HEALTH PLAY

To encourage healthier behavior, the children and their parents received 18 weeks of classroom instruction and hands-on learning built around three essential elements: nutrition, physical activity and behavior.

According to UF IFAS Extension nutrition educator Suzanne Fundingsland, the key to classroom success was to present the information not as a "diet" but as a way of life for the family.

She said the typical road blocks to healthy eating for migrant families include lack of knowledge about how food affects health, lack of adequate kitchen equipment and facilities to prepare and store fresh foods and lack of transportation to shop on a regular basis.

Despite the challenges, participants were eager to put their classroom knowledge to work.

"One mom talked about how she was changing the way she made her tortillas — without fat — and her family was OK with it, which surprised her," said Fundingsland. "Another mom was going to start substituting whole wheat flour in her tortillas."

"Salud Immokalee" participants recently celebrated "graduation night." While parents got reminders about diet and exercise, children reviewed the food groups and yelled out examples of foods labeled Go ("carrots"), Slow ("pancakes") and Whoa ("fatty, salty chips").

Soon half of them were out back chasing soccer balls and half were in a heart-pounding Zumba exercise class, where the energy level was all "go" and no "whoa."

At evening's end, each child received a certificate, pretzels, fruit and a jump rope. Each parent received a promise that Rosado and his team will keep tabs on them and their children through next spring, taking vital signs and inquiring about successes and challenges.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Research among migrant farm workers is rare, and Rosado says he is thrilled by this opportunity.

"That is why community-based research is so powerful," he said. "You don't have to wait years to put findings into action."

Beyond the health benefits, what pleased Rosado most was that during the program, parents discovered each other.

"It's an immigrant community," he said. "A lot of people come on their own. They don't have extended family members. They don't know many people. They end up isolated in their homes."

Now they have a support group. And hope.



COLIN HACKLEY (3)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Students get ready to play some soccer, one of the physical activities in "Salud Immokalee," bringing together Immokalee children and their parents to learn about nutrition and exercise.

"Salud Immokalee" participants proudly display the certificates they earned upon graduation from the program.

Dulce Davalos "pumps up" while taking part in Zumba classes, led by instructor Samantha Molina. The Zumba class was part of "Salud Immokalee."