



Salud Immokalee participants proudly display the certificates earned for completion of the first phase of the program.

BEATING BACK CHILDHOOD OBESITY

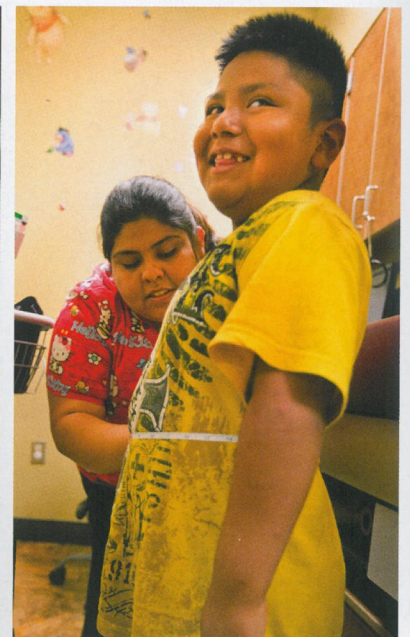
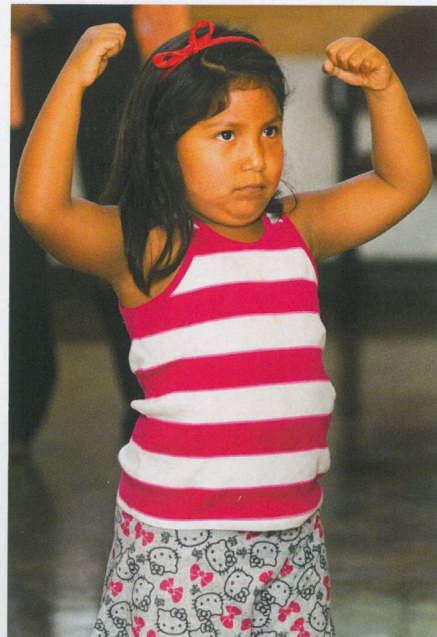
by Kaydee Tuff

The son of migrant farm workers, 11-year-old Freddy Sanchez loves soccer but may never have had the chance to participate without the Salud Immokalee program. Created by Healthcare Network psychologist and FSU College of Medicine assistant professor Dr. Javier Rosado, this innovative program combats the nation's number one childhood health concern - obesity - with education and physical activity that encourages at-risk children and families to make healthy lifestyle choices.

"What we want to do is change behavior. Once these kids know how to take control of their health and weight, with the support of their parents, they'll be empowered to live healthier lives," explains Dr. Rosado.

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 12-month multi-disciplinary program designed to help youngsters and their parents make healthy lifestyle choices.

The concept of managed healthcare is the core mission of the Healthcare Network, which provides primary medical and dental care to over 45,000 patients annually at 13 locations throughout Collier County.



L: Dulce Davalos 'pumps up' while taking part in Zumba classes led by instructor Samantha Molina. Physical activities included soccer and Zumba.

R: Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida nurse Delia Bustamante measures Salud Immokalee participant Yahir Santos on the last night of the first phase of the program. Over the next nine months, Yahir and other participants will be monitored with regular visits to measure their progress in beating obesity.



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

The 12-month program will follow 30 Healthcare Network pediatric patients ages 6-11 with a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 95th percentile. Most of these children have high cholesterol, high blood pressure and are already at risk for developing diabetes. Without intervention, they face a lifetime of poor health.

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. Dr. Rosado will continue to monitor the children and their families on a regular basis.

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

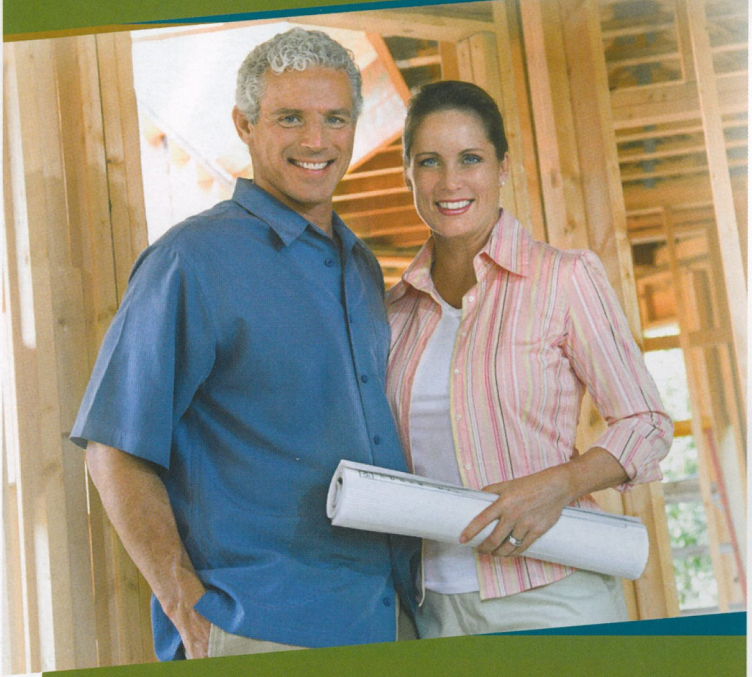
Beyond the health benefits, what pleased Rosado most was that during the program, parents discovered each other.

"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.

Many of Dr. Rosado's study participants were identified aboard the Healthcare Network's Ronald McDonald Care Mobile, which will celebrate its 8th Annual Golf Tournament Thursday, April 11, 2014, at Quail West. Call 239.658.3113 for information on tickets or sponsorship opportunities. Information about Healthcare Network of Southwest Florida, its office locations and services, can be found at www.healthcareswfl.org.

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