

Happy summer to our partners and friends across the state! We're appreciating local goodies at farmers' markets, welcoming new staff, and looking forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming Healthy Kids Healthy Communities (HKHC) training July 22-24!

The Obesity, Nutrition & Physical Activity (ONAPA) staff was happy to mingle with coordinators and partners across the state at the inaugural NM Food Summit this May. We spent two days learning about New Mexico's rich history of supporting local food, the critical need for state investment for food producers, future plans from state cabinet secretaries, and how we can all strengthen New Mexico's food system.

Thank you to everyone who attended! Below is one of the posters summit organizers displayed to inspire and educate us.



We hate saying goodbye again—this time to one of our long-term coordinators in Grant County, Alicia Edwards. Her expertise in government and the built environment made her an instrumental part of the HKHC coordinator team. She made tremendous strides in the schools—establishing a bike club, gardening and healthy tasting programs, and School Lunch Hero day to honor food service staff. She says she loves being recognized in town as the “Veggie Lady,” and is most proud of all the young women she’s mentored. Thank you for all your work, Alicia, and best wishes for your next adventure in Colorado Springs!

News & Events

ONAPA welcomed its second **health educator, Srijana (Sri) Uprety**! As a mom with master's degrees in public health and nutrition, Sri



is passionate about creating environments where children can grow up healthy and supported. She says HKHC aligns with her commitment to improve health outcomes with community-driven solutions. She is from Kathmandu, Nepal.

We are excited to welcome **Grant County's new coordinator, Krista Joslin-Gay**! She spent a lot of time in NM visiting family as a child and settled into Silver City in 2020 with her husband and now three children, ages 2, 5 and 9. She says her goal is to use food as a grounding element in our daily lives. “It’s a moment to rest, reconnect, and a moment for joy and creativity.”

Save the Date!

New Mexico is hosting the **National Farm to Cafeteria Conference** Dec. 2-5 in Albuquerque. Stay tuned for details.

Upcoming Stories

- Healthy Kids 5.2.1.O Challenge
- Student nutrition in Roosevelt
- Trail connectivity in Chaves County



Physical Activity in Schools

Increasing opportunities for physical activity in school settings



HKHC Coordinators Support Bike to School Activities

Among the busy activities in May, HKHC celebrates Bike to School Day by helping schools plan bike to school days or special gym time with wheels. Thank you to all the coordinators who help show kids and adults that walking & rolling to school or at school is possible—and fun!



Grant County prepares for biking fun.



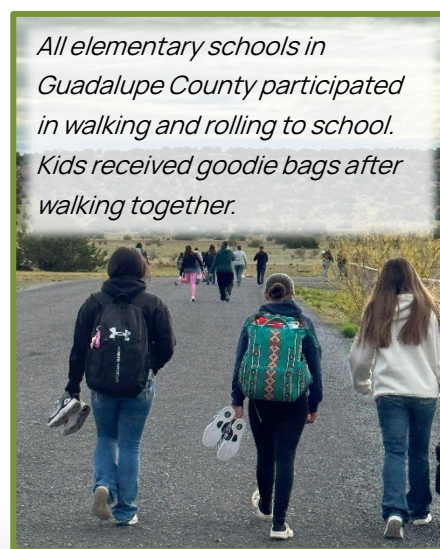
Healthy Kids Colfax County Coordinator Elizabeth Ortega chats on KRTN's radio show to promote Bike to School Day.



Zuni Pueblo students get ready to bike together.



Bottom left to right, Elida school and Valencia school in Roosevelt County, where kids are unable to walk to school for safety reasons so they get P.E. time to roll around their gym or bike around their playground.



All elementary schools in Guadalupe County participated in walking and rolling to school. Kids received goodie bags after walking together.



Coordinator Corner



Built Environment with Alicia Edwards

Healthy Kids Grant County Coordinator Alicia Edwards has long been a leading voice advocating for her county to adopt and prioritize a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Trail Master Plan that established the community's vision for trails, outdoor recreation and open spaces. Here, she shares how to get your foot in the door of government and build a coalition of advocates.



San Vicente Creek Trail building in Grant County.

Alicia advises you to look in your local government for any group or department that supports funding for open spaces and/or the built environment, and learn about their plans and priorities.

Get familiar with your county's

comprehensive plan to see if there is

anything related to trails, open spaces or safe street initiatives. What are their goals around sidewalks or trails with new construction? Do they require any trail or space in new housing developments? Are they considering any trail projects? Check for any other plans that may be related and make sure they align.

"It takes a long, long time to get this work done. If you make demands, chances are you're not going to get far. Know what you want and be committed to building relationships around that."

What to Know About the Infrastructure Capital Investment Program (ICIP)

- All government entities must have an ICIP priority list to seek state capital outlay funds.
- Your county, municipality or political subdivision (e.g., acequia) holds public meetings to hear community priorities before submitting its ICIP priority list due Sept. 1 annually.
- Projects ranked #1-5 in importance are likely to be funded. Your job is to get your project in the top 3 of the ICIP list.
- Take advantage of public meetings and build and train your coalition to advocate.
- Your project has a better chance of funding if:
 - It is phased over years.
 - You have great public support from a variety of interests.
 - You have low costs per people served (i.e., can show a great number will be served).
 - You have another funding source, like an Outdoor Recreation Grant.

If your community has no plan, ask the commission or council when they will update their plan and then build your coalition of advocates, and participate in the public meetings during the updating process. You need to read legal notices to find out about meetings, unless someone keeps you informed.

Talk to a city councilor or county

commissioner who shares your values. Know what you want—do you want to know what exists or are you proposing a specific idea?

Attend meetings—a trails/open space committee (if there is one), planning and zoning commission, county commission or city council. You're looking for allies in local government. Consider tourism, outdoor recreation groups and a department of parks and recreation or community development. You might need to hold a coalition meeting to bring groups together so everyone talks to one another.



Healthy Eating in Schools

Strategies that increase access to healthy, local foods in NM schools



Schools Expand Production with Hydroponic Towers

The mother-daughter food service team in Cobre Consolidated School District was looking for ways to incorporate the Universal School Meals rules for local, fresh food when they attended a hydroponics training by Gabriel Gaarden of ONAPA.

"That's what lit the spark," said Samantha Grijalva, food service manager for Snell Middle School and Bayard Elementary School.

Thanks to supportive superintendent, Michael Koury, the team had a purchase order for a hydroponics tower shortly after, enabling them to grow green star lettuce, basil and romaine.

"The kids were so excited with the heads of lettuce and the long roots," Samantha said. "One kid brought it to every lunch table to show kids."

Increasingly, New Mexicans are incorporating hydroponic systems into their food production. Schools and farms in HKHC communities like Elida, Zuni Pueblo, Farmington, Roswell, Raton and Portales are all using hydroponic systems that grow plants in a nutrient-rich, water solution instead of soil.

Student Nutrition Director Alma Grijalva and Samantha want to get a hydroponic tower at every school site and involve students more in the production. "For them



Top, Healthy Kids Grant County coordinators hand out pesto samples made from the basil the school grew.

Below, Samantha holds up freshly harvested lettuce at Central Elementary in Cobre.



to see this at a young age, it might be something they can make a career out of or they could get a little tower for their house," said Samantha.

Alma's team grew enough lettuce to serve every elementary school in Cobre this year. And they keep looking at ways to improve, including providing meals that are 75% scratch cooked, growing food in cafeterias, and eliminating disposable trays to reduce waste.

"Alma's leadership is really transforming the school lunch experience," said Alicia Edwards, Healthy Kids Grant County Coordinator. "And it was a big deal for Cobre schools to buy the hydroponic tower for her."

Benefits of Hydroponic Systems

- Efficient water use
- Faster plant growth
- Enables year-round production
- Grows crops in limited spaces
- Greater control over plant nutrients and environmental conditions



Cobre Food Service staff pose in front of their hydroponic tower.

Community Spotlight

Guadalupe County Expands Healthy Food & Garden Activity

Later this year, Guadalupe County residents will add a new farmers' market, giving growers in Anton Chico an opportunity to sell their goods closer to home. The new farmers' market is one way Healthy Kids Guadalupe County Coordinator Nicole Duran is expanding opportunities in her tiny, rural hometown that has a church, a bar and deep agricultural roots.



Preschoolers at three local preschools enjoy monthly taste testing as well as planting quick-growing starter plants.

"It's very hard for elderly farmers to travel to other existing markets," Nicole said. "We'll do it at the school so kids can learn from older farmers and interact with people in the community."

Nicole partnered with Anton Chico Elementary School to establish a market in its parking lot. Students will help plant, water, pick, and sell produce from their school's new greenhouse, and older kids will run a booth at the farmers' market. "They will get to see the food go from farm to market to table," she said. Nicole is also looking into establishing the school's greenhouse as a NM Grown vendor so they can include their freshly grown veggies in school lunches.

Wind destroyed the school's greenhouse this spring so the market opening was delayed as folks finished repairs and prepared the greenhouse to be used in a summer STEM program. In the school year, the greenhouse will serve as an outdoor classroom with each grade level maintaining their own section.

Interim Principal Chris Pacheco said he is grateful for all the programs and fresh food Nicole brings to Anton Chico Elementary, including samples of new, local food on Nuevo Thursdays.

"Considering it's a really rural community, a lot of students don't get as much exposure to fresh produce, so it is really beneficial for our community," he said.

Kids are busy moving their bodies too—earning tokens through a mileage club at the

Anton Chico Elementary School. And for the latest Bike to School day this May, four Guadalupe County schools participated with the main event in Anton Chico. There, students got a police escort to the fire station, where they walked to school together and received a goodie bag from the New Mexico State Department of Transportation.



Thank You, Partners!

Anton Chico Elementary School

Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools

Acting Principal Chris Pacheco

Teacher Kate Sanchez

Teacher Erma Madrid



New Mexico Grown

Increasing access to healthy, local food in schools, preschools & senior centers

Twin Rivers Farm Adds Veggies to Alfalfa & Pecan Farm

Jeff Nibert hadn't considered growing anything else on his uncle's 285-acre hay and pecan farm until Becky Joyce and Paula Camp visited the farm and pitched the NM Grown program. Jeff and his wife Hannah Wright returned to Jeff's hometown of Roswell to help operate his uncle's farm nine years ago. As they improved farm operations over the years, the two HKHC Chaves County coordinators kept nudging Jeff towards NM Grown, especially once he started selling garden-grown produce at the Roswell Farmers' Market.

"We thought maybe we could do something for the community, and not just the farmers' market," Jeff said. They installed a 25' x 65' greenhouse equipped with automated hydroponic tables near the end of last summer and grew a variety of cherry tomatoes, and butter, romaine and muir lettuce, producing about 1,500 heads of lettuce and a couple hundred pounds of tomatoes for the Roswell Independent School District.



Above, Jeff Nibert, manager of the Twin Rivers Farm in Roswell, holds the lettuce that he grows in hydroponic tables in his greenhouse and sells to Roswell Independent School District.

He continues to supply the district with lettuce for summer school's grab-and-go lunches. Twin Rivers is the only local supplier for the summer, said Kimberly Meeks, RISD's director of student nutrition. "We purchase as much as he has available," she said, adding that she also buys from the locally-owned Graves Farm and other regional farms during the regular school year.

"It's great to have the support to be able to have this opportunity to sell products to schools," Jeff said. "It's opened up a new venue to us, which has opened other doors for our expansion and recognition through the Golden Chile program. It's nice to know there are other like-minded people trying to do the same kind of thing in New Mexico."

He knows the schools would buy more produce so he's open to expanding

and also inviting students to explore the sprawling farm. "We want to have the schools come out to the farm and learn about agriculture, maybe stoke up some kids that TikTok isn't the only way to live. It might be hard work, but it's fulfilling. We have control over our stuff, and we can do what we want."

Jeff recognizes he's a rare breed among New Mexico farmers—young and growing both veggies and hay, but he hopes to be a catalyst for change. "There definitely needs to be more people who can do this program. We're trying to stoke up the younger generation to step up and bring some conscious effort into providing nourishing food to their communities."



Hannah Wright, Jeff's wife, watches their son Edward water in the greenhouse. Jeff relies on help from Hannah and one full-time worker.