

Greetings to our partners and friends this fall! The Obesity, Nutrition & Physical Activity (ONAPA) staff hope everyone enjoyed a Happy Thanksgiving. We feel grateful to be connected to our partners and coordinators, and appreciate the work all of you do to increase people's opportunities to eat healthy food and be physically active.

It's always a busy fall season as schools settle back to school, and we plan activities associated with Walk to School Day and NM Grown Month as well as coordinate BMI surveillance. Big thanks to Becky Joyce in Chaves County for spearheading our BMI data collection along with support from ONAPA and coordinators in Grant, Roosevelt, San Juan & Zuni Pueblo.



Thank you to the Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool team for judging a photo contest hosted by Anna Martin, Food Security Coordinator at the Early Childhood Education & Care Department, in celebration of Farm to School Month and Farm to Child & Adult Food Care Program Week. Nicki Perez, Alberto Zavala, and Michelle Chavez judged early childhood centers' photos featuring NM Grown food. ONAPA contributed garden kits, Dinky books and prizes. Congrats to the following winners:

- Echo Aztec • Growing Up New Mexico (Santa Fe)
- Love the Children Learning Center (Aztec)

## News & Events

This fall, ONAPA was busy planning the **Golden Chile Awards ceremony and the 10<sup>th</sup> annual National Farm to Cafeteria Conference Dec. 1-4** in Albuquerque.

On the evening of Dec. 1, the NM Grown Coalition celebrated 92 schools, preschools, growers, food hubs, and senior centers for connecting students and seniors to locally grown food. We were proud to honor our biggest group of NM Grown supporters yet!

The following day, ONAPA presented NM Grown's procurement system at the conference. The conference was "designed to deepen our collective impact, expand our reach, and cultivate a more resilient and equitable food future for all," according to the National Farm to School Network. Thanks to everyone who participated in this exciting professional development opportunity!

ONAPA wished Srijana Uprety, health educator, farewell in October. We were happy to get to know her and appreciate that she left our team to spend more time with her daughter.

## Upcoming Stories

- Golden Chile Awards Program
- The Family 5.2.1.O Challenge
- BMI surveillance



# Physical Activity in Schools



Increasing opportunities for healthy eating  
& physical activity in school settings

## HKHC Coordinators Support Walk and Roll to School

HKHC schools walked and rolled to or around school in Chaves, Colfax, Roosevelt, and San Juan counties. Thank you to all the coordinators, school staff, volunteers, and partners who show kids physical activity can be a fun way to start their day.



*Top (left to right): Chaves County; Kirtland Elementary in San Juan; Raton Intermeidate students with red backpacks from the NM Dept of Transportation. Bottom right: Elida kindergarteners & San Juan students.*



# Coordinator Corner



## Spreading Joy & Information Through Healthy Kids Facebook

Thank you to all the coordinators who post on Facebook to celebrate and inform their communities about school activities, recreational offerings, recipe and snack ideas as well as HKHC-focused work like Walk to School and Farm to School Month. Featured below are posts from Chaves, Guadalupe, Roosevelt & San Juan counties.



**Left:** Healthy Kids San Juan County Coordinator Patience Williams shared a post from Farmington School Nutrition showing kids learning how to make apple cider. Sharing and liking other organizations' posts is a great way to support partners and community activities. **Right:** Healthy Kids Roosevelt County Coordinator Caron Powers posted pictures honoring food service workers throughout the month of October to highlight Farm to School Month. Her posts are one of the community's favorites because she's recognizing people everyone knows.



Healthy Kids Grant County Coordinator Krista Joslin-Gay posts this picture whenever bike club meets. This is a good way to remind people of bike safety and Healthy Kids' support of a school bike club.



**Left to right:** Krista posted a recipe idea to "balance out the highs of sugary treats." Healthy Kids Chaves County posted a fun Thanksgiving-related snack idea.

**Far right:** Healthy Kids Guadalupe County Coordinator Nicole Duran and Lazy J Farms in Anton Chico introduced kids to different types of cucumbers at a fun presentation at the Moises Library this fall.

# New Mexico Grown

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

## Gathings Gardens Aims to Shift Food Culture Towards Local

Jeremy and Selece Gathings wanted to bolster the area's healthy food supply and educate local kids about growing food when they returned to Jeremy's hometown of Bloomfield with their four children in 2022. In their third season of Gathings Gardens, the duo sells their fresh produce to local institutions and hosts educational field trips.

They also sponsored two school gardens, and established a nonprofit and the San Juan County Farmers Coalition to bring farmers together to communicate and collaborate. Recently, they all contributed fresh produce for 145 food boxes for local families.

The Gathings' bigger goal is to open a co-op in two years where people can buy fresh, seasonal produce year round in Farmington, creating a food culture that doesn't demand shipping resources.

"There was a time in our history when this area was an exporter of food, and I think we could become that again," Jeremy said. "We want to show people that is possible, and there are really big benefits of doing that here. The more we can expose kids to growing food, the bigger difference we make."



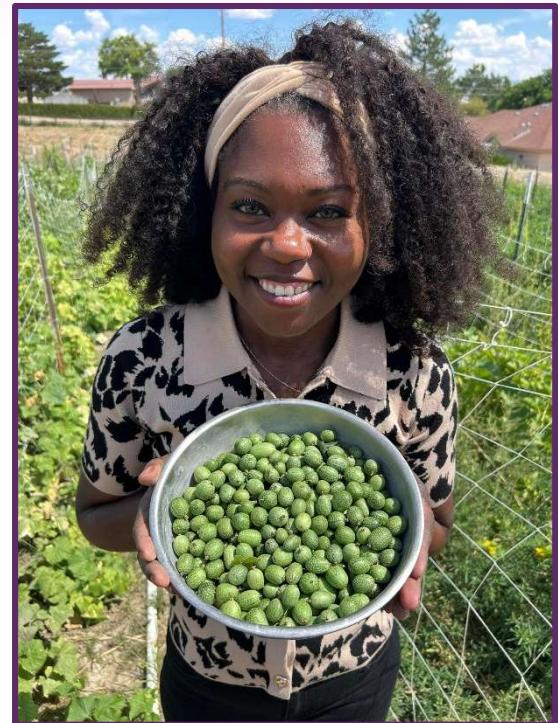
*Jeremy Gathings of Gathings Gardens holds the Blossom award his farm earned in last year's Golden Chile Awards Program. The Bloomfield farm earned the top-tier Golden Chile award this year.*

The Gathings operate on 23 acres of mostly pastureland with an almost 2-acre dedicated vegetable garden of high-density planting and frequent crop rotations. When the Boys and Girls Club visit for field trips, the kids see a variety of crops at different stages. Their favorite part is pulling carrots out of the dirt.

Jacqueline Montoya with the San Juan County Harvest Food Hub helped connect the Gathings to the NM Grown program and learn how to navigate the marketplace of selling to schools, preschools, and senior centers.

"If you're going to drive some of these institutional changes where mindsets will change around food, you need to focus on your farm full-time. I don't think that would be possible if we didn't have markets with institutional buyers," Jeremy said.

Jeremy works the farm full-time as Selece drives their vision forward. She also serves as director of the San Juan County Early Childhood Coalition. They jointly run their nonprofit, which partners with other organizations like Save the Children and 100% San Juan Initiative to distribute donations and facilitate community projects.



*Selece Gathings holds up sour gherkins before they are packed and delivered to a preschool in the Bloomfield area.*

*"I don't think our operation and a lot of the small farms here would be viable without NM Grown."*

*Jeremy Gathings*

# Healthy Kids 5.2.1.O Challenge

## Roosevelt County Schools Support Healthy Habits Challenge

When it's time for Dana Howell's classroom to start the Healthy Kids 5.2.1.O Challenge, she can rely on Caron Powers to take the lead. Caron tries to make it as easy as possible for busy teachers to implement the 3-week challenge in Roosevelt County – and every school participates.

"I appreciate that she makes copies of handouts for the kids, and everything is ready to go," said Dana, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade teacher at Elida. "She comes in and sings a little song with them and teaches them all about it. They look forward to her coming, and she doesn't put anything on me."

Portales and the small farming communities of Elida and Floyd implemented the challenge for their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders during Caron's first full year as coordinator in 2017, and Dora's 3<sup>rd</sup> graders joined the past three years.

Caron started by selling the challenge to principals. She explained that the program teaches kids to think about their choices. Ideally, it instills the daily habits of physical activity, healthy nutrition, water consumption, and reduced screen time. Once principals are on board, she schedules the timing of all activities with teachers.



Elida students display the medals they earned after completing the Healthy Kids 5.2.1.O Challenge.

aware that they can be in charge of their own health," Dana said.

Her kids tell her how many fruits and vegetables they ate, or that they played outside instead of watching T.V. "Time on their devices is probably the hardest for them, but I do see them learning to balance it with other things," Dana said.

Caron introduces Healthy Kids concepts in kindergarten, and each year students see her for specific activities like Rethink Your Drink, fruit and vegetable tastings, and garden fun.

"They remember me and know I'm always encouraging them to eat healthy and be active," she said.

### Key Takeaways

1. Get principal support first.
2. Make it easy for teachers.
3. Track dates & e-mail reminders.
4. Be available throughout.
5. Organize, schedule & remind.

Her organization and communication are key to her success from there. She supplies teachers with the exact number of needed materials, sends weekly email reminders, and writes daily morning announcements to ensure office support.

Dana's class in Elida has joined the challenge since Caron first introduced it. Her students look forward to Caron's visits and love learning that water can be flavored with fruits or vegetables. The challenge helps students become aware of counting serving sizes and tracking their time on screens. "It's great for them to be



Healthy Kids Healthy Communities Roosevelt County

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Nov 19 ·

Congratulations to Floyd's Second and Third Graders! They participated in the Healthy Kids 5.2.1.O Challenge and many students earned medals.

Floyd Schools encourage their students to be active and eat healthy. Way to go! 🍏🍎🍏

Caron recognizes participating schools on her Healthy Kids Roosevelt County's Facebook page.



# Built Environment

Increasing access to physical activity in communities



## Persistence Pays in Connecting Roswell's Trail System

If you make a path safe, accessible and clean, people will use it. If you connect it to a network of other trails near key recreational facilities, expect that path to be busy. "Everyone and their brother is out there," says Jim Burress, Roswell's Parks and Recreation director and co-chair of the Parks & Recreation Commission.

The Commission worked for more than a decade to build a connection between Spring River Trail and the Cielo Grande Trail in Roswell with Healthy Kids Chaves County's support. Today, people can access the Aquatics Center, soccer fields, a disc golf course, Enchanted Lands Park, and the bird sanctuary through an interconnected trail system that crosses the city.

"It hooked everything together just by putting in that little piece," Jim said. "It's kind of a big deal."



That little piece has been one of Becky Joyce's babies since she joined Paula Camp as a coordinator in Healthy Kids Chaves County more than a dozen years ago. She's nurtured it along, first as an idea that required a master plan in order to get funding, and through many discussions as the Parks and Recreation Commission debated the best routes, considering neighbor input and traffic concerns.

The city applied and received a Transportation Alternatives Program grant from the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), which covered 70% of the cost – essential funding to make the trail happen. The project wound its way through city committee approvals for a year before city engineers could plan and design a trail that extends along and across 8<sup>th</sup> Street, through a field to the Cielo Grande Trail.

Jim noted that a lot of people give up when projects take so long. "It if wasn't for a handful of dedicated people, this never would have happened," he said. "Becky was calm and patient, and that was extremely important."

Becky advises her fellow coordinators to not give up, even when the process is halted or personnel change. "Anything that involves the city takes a lot of time and a lot of committee meetings," she said. "Find an outside group that can help move your project along, like NMDOT."

Becky added that, "the Parks and Recreation Commission is

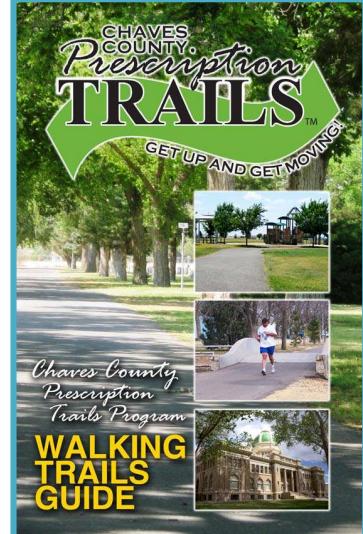
working hard to repair and re-mark our biking lanes in Roswell as well – more great news."

Jim sees people of all ages on the trails at all times – from moms running behind strollers to ladies using walkers. "People walk that before the sun comes up. I hear about it by 8:15 if a light is out."

Jim Burress is leading the city's work in repairing flood damage to trails and roads as well as painting share-the-road signs on roads, re-marking bike lanes, and making sure residents are educated about the new trail. Signs and lights help people feel safe to use the trails.

### Thank You, Partners!

**Parks Director Jim Burress**  
**Roswell City Engineer Louis Najar (retired) & James MacCornack (current)**



*Jane Batson, a previous coordinator in Chaves County, produced a trail guide that can help communities see gaps and connection possibilities.*