

Happy spring, everyone! It's been a busy season for our Healthy Kids Healthy Community (HKHC) coordinators – planting gardens, participating in cafeteria celebrations, celebrating Nutrition Month, planning Bike to School Day, and more! Thank you for all your hard work!

Our Obesity, Nutrition and Physical Activity (ONAPA) Program is happy to say we have submitted contracts for next fiscal year.

Rita Condon and Deborah Busemeyer of ONAPA have appreciated connecting with our coordinator team and community partners in San Juan, Grant, Hidalgo and Curry counties. We are currently recruiting new coordinators in Colfax and Guadalupe counties.



ONAPA's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Coordinator Gabriel Gaarden volunteered at Las Cruces' Family Bike Fiesta with 272 students and 211 parents/guardians. Kids rode smoothie bikes, got free helmets and bike repairs, tried a mountain bike course, and joined community rides.



Healthy Kids Curry County Coordinator Kyla Hooten arranged Texico Elementary's first color run with parents cheering from the sidelines.

News & Events

The Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool (HKHP) team of Alberto Zavala and Michelle Chavez, along with Health Educator Nicki Perez are presenting about the HKHP program at regional Child Adult Care Food Program trainings held by the Early Childhood Care & Education Department this spring/summer. This is the main way our program recruits preschools to participate in the New Mexico Grown Program and our healthy challenges. Thank you, HKHP team, for spreading the word!

Save the Date

We are planning our **July 21-23 HKHC training in Santa Fe** with a focus on BMI surveillance, coalition building, federal funding for active transportation projects, and state funding through the Outdoor Recreation Division to improve equitable access to the outdoors. Gabriel is coordinating with Santa Fe's Safe Routes to School coordinator for a site visit so we can learn how he plans routes. We look forward to spending time with all of you.

Upcoming Stories

- HKHC Annual Training
- Healthy Kids Grant County
- National Bike to School



Coordinator Corner



Sharing News & Information

It's been a time of transition in our HKHC team, welcoming new coordinators and bidding farewell to three coordinators who are moving on to other work and retirement. Nicole Duran of Guadalupe County is currently focusing on her DWI-prevention work. At the end of the fiscal year, Krista Joslin-Gay will turn her attention to developing a farm on her family's property in Grant County.

Caron Powers of Roosevelt County, pictured right with Elida students who completed the Healthy Kids 5.2.1.0 Challenge, has worked with us for a decade. She created an empire of school gardens in Portales, established consistent nutrition education in schools, recognizes food service workers on Facebook, and connects with her Health Council and Chamber of Commerce to further her work. She recruited and trained her replacement, Laurie Collins, who will expand on Caron's progress transforming Roosevelt County. Caron, thank you for your dedication, your responsiveness and your care for HKHC.



We will miss you all and wish everyone the best!

We are pleased to announce that we have **two new coordinators** who are working in HKHC Hidalgo and Curry counties. **Christina Johnson** (pictured far left) is the Community Wellness Manager at National Center for Frontier Communities and our new Hidalgo County coordinator. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, running, and gardening with her husband and daughter.



Born and raised in eastern New Mexico, **Kyla Hooten** is proud to call Texico home with her husband and two kids. "I can't wait to kick off this new journey with HKHC and help promote healthy eating and active living in our Curry County communities," she said.

Thank you Caron & Becky Joyce of Chaves County for great healthy fundraising ideas: sliming the principal (below left) and an obstacle mud run (below right)!





Healthy Eating in Schools



Celebrating School Lunch Heroes & Trying New Recipes

Eastern New Mexico celebrated the hard-working food service staff during special cafeteria celebrations with the ONAPA team, HKHC coordinators and our Public Education Department partners in the Healthy Universal School Meals (HUSM) Program. Schools in Melrose, Elida, Lake Arthur and Hagerman served new recipes with New Mexico Grown foods to recognize the work of implementing HUSM in their meals. Schools are required to serve 50% scratch-cooked items, give students a voice in their meals, provide share tables to reduce waste, and highlight NM Grown foods in their menus.

In Melrose, the food service team joked and chatted while hustling to bread chicken, bake rolls, and wash breakfast trays. The team takes pride in feeding about 200 students from pre-K to seniors and provides plenty of protein and carbs on game days as a nutritional boost for their competitive athletes.

Future Farmers of America (FFA) high-school students in Hagerman served samples for students to try and vote on whether they wanted the item again. Chile Colorado (red chile with pork) received the most votes. Schools are creative in assessing student preferences. Melrose and Hagerman students voted that they liked a dish by dropping a pinto bean in glass jars labeled with each new recipe. In Dexter, kids throw away their sample dish in green (yes) or red (no) wastebaskets.



Left to right, Melrose Schools' Food Service Team: Director Summer Adams, Chef Heather Rush, Substitute Chef Amanda White & Chef Dusty Payne prepared scratch-prepared rolls, air fried chicken, macaroni and cheese and garlic-herb zucchini. All the new recipes were a hit!



Above, Liz Anichini of HUSM asked students in Elida to vote whether they tried, liked or loved the new dishes of esquites (Mexican street corn) and green chile rice, as part of Student Voice & Choice.

We are excited to see food service teams engage with their students and expand their nutritious and locally grown offerings.

A big thank you to all the schools that participated in the cafeteria celebrations as well as the food service training by Brigaid in Portales, where staff learned efficient scratch-cooking techniques as they prepared new recipes together.



Lake Arthur Elementary invited families to its healthy cafeteria celebration with PED and HKHC. They served green chile stew, pinto beans & arroz con leche (the best ever, according to HKHC Coordinator Paula Camp) with local food from Graves Farms, USA Beef Packing, and El Metate.



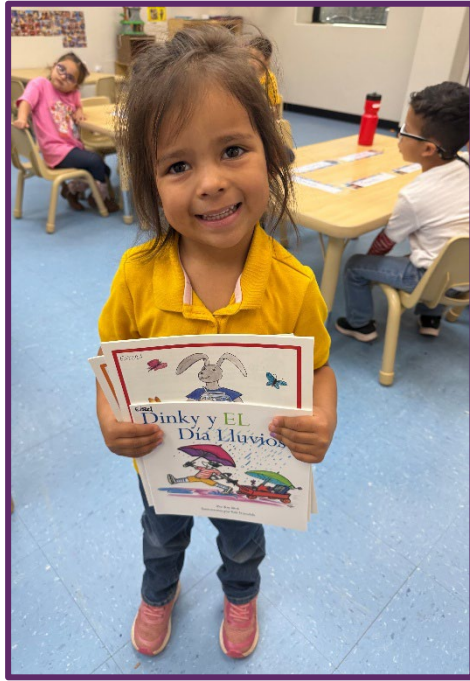
Healthy Communities



Recognizing Our Work to Expand Opportunities for Healthy Living

From planting during National Nutrition Month to biking on National Bike to School Day, schools and coordinators have been on the go! Here is a glimpse of the activities happening in our Healthy Kids Healthy Communities.

Below left, a big thank you to Principal Andrea Gonzales who led her school on bikes from the fire station to Anton Chico Elementary in Healthy Kids Guadalupe County. She said most of the school participated, and “the kids had a blast.” Center, a student from Brilliant Bees Learning Academy in Chaparral shows off her HKHC-created Dinky book during the Family 5.2.1.0 Challenge. Right, parents and students gather for Walking Wednesday in Roswell. Healthy Kids Chaves County Coordinator Becky Joyce arranges for high school athletes to walk with elementary students.



Left, students in Healthy Kids Zuni Pueblo wait for their green smoothie, made to celebrate the elementary-school efforts at learning traditional dances. Right, first-graders practice biking skills during P.E. class at Bayard Elementary School. Healthy Kids Grant County received an Outdoor Recreation Grant to equip Cobre Consolidated School District with bikes, helmets, and a trailer for storage and transportation between schools.



Love the Children Kitchen Crew Transforms Nutrition Program

On a recent spring day, Xaria Garcia finished cleaning dishes from a lunch of vegetable barley stew as she talked about increasing the preschoolers' water consumption with fruit-infused water and outdoor hydration stations. Xaria is laser focused on enhancing students' wellbeing since becoming kitchen manager two years ago. As a result, the 23-year-old and her team are transforming Love the Children Learning Center's nutrition into a hands-on, comprehensive program that engages 200 preschoolers and their families at four sites in Bloomfield and Aztec.

Parents consistently ask Xaria for her recipes because their children want her creative concoctions like avocado toast with bananas, so she created one-pagers (pictured below) and is planning to start a newsletter. Ultimately, Xaria wants to serve 100% scratch cooking with her cooking teammates, Francis Dooling and Celestina Garcia.

Buying local is a key part of her nutrition program. She loves introducing children to farm-fresh vegetables like Williams Farm's cherry tomatoes that the preschoolers crave. "We want the kids to understand that we need our farmers, and we want the farmers to know they are important," she said.

Kitchen staff hadn't been involved in family engagement nights before Xaria became kitchen manager, and now she prepares snacks and invites children to do fun activities like paint with bell peppers. "I let parents know we are here for your kids as much as the teachers. We aren't here to just cook for them but to help them learn and grow," she said.



Students love seeing the variety of plants, from dill and basil to chard and onions, grow in two hydroponic towers inside their classrooms.



Left to right, Chef Celestina Garcia, Kitchen Manager Xaria Garcia & Head Chef Francis Dooling.

Kids get opportunities to garden with Xaria, transferring starter plants from the hydroponic towers into garden beds after using the garden kit from Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool (HKHP) last year. The center also implemented Family 5.2.1.0, an HKHP initiative to instill healthy habits in the young students by challenging them to eat more fruits and vegetables, drink water, reduce screen time and be physically active.



Recent graduates visit and ask Xaria's team to cook at their

new school – a true testament to their high quality food. "It's exciting to shape behaviors at an early age so kids develop a preference for healthy food instead of salty, sweet and fatty," Xaria said.

Thanks to a Scratch Cooking Start-Up Grant from the Early Childhood Education and Care Department, Love the Children will soon upgrade its kitchen with new equipment that will further support and enhance the center's growing nutrition program. Bravo to Love the Children owner, Crystal Jacques Aguilar, for continually investing in and supporting her staff as they build a strong and meaningful nutrition program, and to the team of chefs who care deeply about the health of their students!



Visiting and Connecting in HKHC Communities

San Juan County Supports Biking & Healthy Food Programs

In our site visiting tour of HKHC, Rita Condon and Deborah Busemeyer, program managers for ONAPA and HKHC, spent two days in San Juan County, connecting with enthusiastic early childhood and elementary-school providers as well as champions of creating a safer community for bike riders.

Our first stop was at Blanco Elementary nine miles east of Bloomfield, where Principal Darrin Wright showed us the school's solidly built greenhouse, completely enclosed with a kitchen sink and potential for food processing. He is also eyeing an area next to the greenhouse for raised garden beds in a second phase of the school's gardening plans. We discussed the possibility of water harvesting from their roof and hosting a farm stand for families as a school fundraiser.

Principal Wright is an enthusiastic partner of Healthy Kids San Juan County. Earlier this spring, he welcomed the National Institute of Flamenco for a two-week dance program that included nutrition education with Coordinator Patience Williams and freshly picked tomatoes from Grady Williams of Williams Family Farm.

We spent much of our afternoon attending a built environment coalition with such partners as Cooperative Extension, Boys and Girls Club and Chris Connelly of F.A.S.T. (Farmington Area Single Tracks), a nonprofit championing equality and mentorship for young bike riders. We heard interest in re-opening Liberty Park and promoting a bike culture in San Juan, where trails crisscross the entire county.

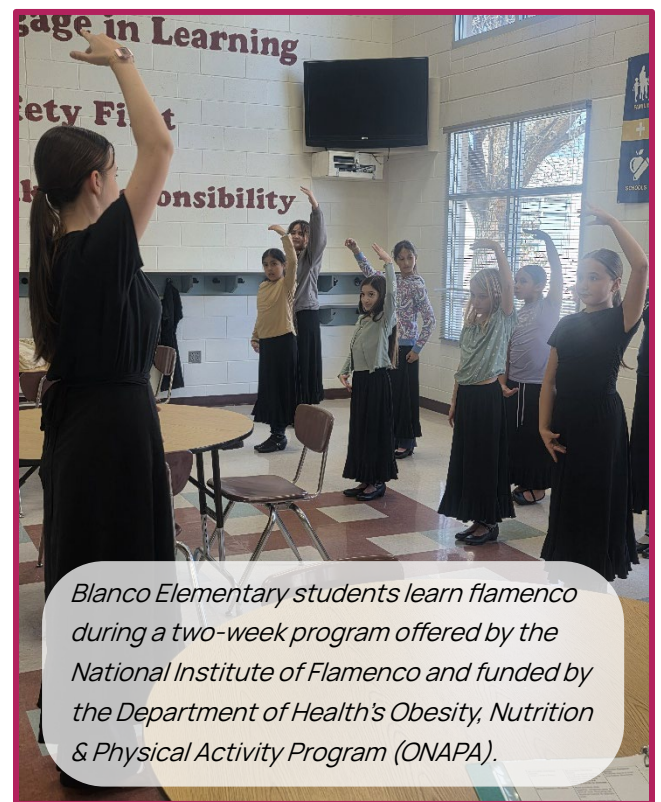


Chef Elviera Curley poses with monkey bread she made from scratch for the following day's breakfast. She is one of three food-service staff serving about 150 students at Blanco Elementary in Healthy Kids San Juan County.

Hearing directly from community partners helps guide our work; we included opening Liberty Park, starting a bike club at an elementary school, and working on pedestrian-bike connectivity as part of Patience's work next fiscal year.

We loved touring two preschools – Love the Children Learning Center (featured on the previous page) and San Juan College's Child & Family Development Center, where we checked out outdoor play areas for possible garden space. We discussed how to work with the college's food services contractor to secure locally grown food for the center.

Our final stop in town was a delightful visit with Stacey Chang, who leads the nursing staff of Farmington Municipal Schools. She's a thoughtful partner who considers all aspects of children's health and connects Patience to district staff. She suggested we create an instructional video on how we conduct BMI surveillance to help educate parents about the voluntary, confidential program. We appreciate meeting our partners in person and learning from them.



Blanco Elementary students learn flamenco during a two-week program offered by the National Institute of Flamenco and funded by the Department of Health's Obesity, Nutrition & Physical Activity Program (ONAPA).