

NM Farm to School Alliance: A Creation Story

Public Health Issue: Address obesity and hunger by increasing access to healthy, local, affordable food in schools and communities across New Mexico.



To tackle this hugely important public health issue and systematically address food access beyond Healthy Kids Healthy Communities (HKHC), it was clear from the beginning our team needed more robust statewide partnerships and greater support among state leaders. Meaningful progress could only happen if the right players were sitting at the same table.

The first step involved closer collaboration with the Public Education Department (PED) to grow farm

to school efforts. Through PED, we had a viable avenue for highlighting rural communities and the successes they've had expanding access to healthy, local, affordable food. We also had an opening to begin creating a more effective system that would make it much easier for schools to procure local food.

Simultaneously, an unexpected and well-timed opportunity arose for HKHC to participate in Food & Farms Day at the legislature in partnership with PED and Farm to Table NM. Coordinators met with their legislators and provided information about ways they've increased healthy eating and physical activity opportunities in their schools and communities. It was also an opportune time to raise awareness about the need for additional funding to support New Mexico-grown produce for school meals, especially in rural and underserved areas.

Our participation in Food & Farms Day yielded two exciting results: first, the legislature recognized the need to address obesity, hunger, and food access and allocated funding for schools to purchase locally grown produce for school meals! HKHC has also been able to capitalize on the experience and cultivate meaningful partnerships with state agencies and organizations to better align our efforts, maximize our impact, and effectively advance farm to school initiatives in our state.



This past year, we formalized an agreement with key organizations such as PED, Farm to Table NM, the University of New Mexico Community Engagement Center, NM School Nutrition Association, Food Corps, and Bernalillo Public Schools and created the NM Farm to School Alliance. Our values and goals are to: 1) transform school food and nutrition by ensuring equitable access that is healthy, local, affordable, and grounded in tradition; 2) reconnect to our roots through food and farming; and 3) build community capacity for a just school environment.

Because of the work we're collectively doing and the formal partnership we created among key organizations committed to increasing equitable food access, the National Farm to School Network chose New Mexico to host the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference in April 2020!!

Save the Date!



April 21-23, 2020 | Albuquerque, New Mexico

For the 10th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, coming to **Albuquerque, NM, April 21-23, 2020!**

Hosted by the National Farm to School Network and the NM Farm to School Alliance, this biennial event convenes hundreds of leaders working to grow healthier communities, advance equity and justice, strengthen local food systems, and foster a culture of healthy food and agricultural literacy across the country.

Early bird registration is open! Visit the website for more info and to register: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/farm-to-school-cafeteria-conference>

Current & Upcoming Events!

HKHC Statewide Training: February 4th- 6th in Santa Fe

Training content includes dialogue around specific strategies to increase and effectively communicate about healthy eating and physical activity opportunities in schools and communities. In partnership with the NM Farm to School Alliance, we're also putting on a dynamic civic engagement training prior to Food & Farms Day / School Nutrition Day at the legislature. Join us!

Food & Farms Day / School Nutrition Day at the State Legislature: Thursday, February 6th

Created in recent years to recognize community programs and leaders who prioritize equitable food access and invest in local farmers, local communities, and the health of our children. Our HKHC crew will be at the Roundhouse to inform policymakers about obesity prevention efforts and successes at the local level.

March is National Nutrition Month!

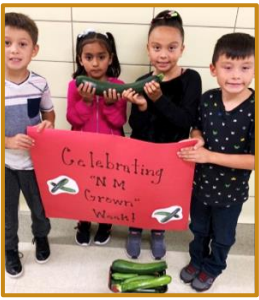
Celebrated each year during the month of March, National Nutrition Month focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. Check out the website for resources and to learn more: <https://sm.eatright.org/NNMinfo>



Healthy Schools Spring Training: March 30th and 31st

HKHC coordinators are invited and encouraged to attend! The training will be held at the Embassy Suites in Albuquerque, additional information forthcoming.

Community Highlights: NM Grown Week & Farm to School Month



In celebration of New Mexico Grown Week (September 3rd – October 4th, the first week of Farm to School Month), HKHC coordinators and partners joined together to highlight local produce, farmers, and school nutrition in cafeterias and classrooms across the state! The NM legislature allocated \$450,000 to the Public Education Department for providing grant funding to districts for purchasing locally grown produce in the 2019-20 school year; 19 HKHC elementary schools were awarded a total of \$118,500.

Here's what some schools did to celebrate NM Grown Week:

School cafeterias in Roswell and Dexter highlighted locally grown produce from Graves Farm on the salad bar. Dexter took it a step further and held a poster contest, watermelon eating contest with local melons, and a corn shucking event, after which the cafeteria cooked and served the corn to the students. HKHC Chaves County coordinators Paula Camp and Becky Joyce also set up an exhibit at the Southeast NM State Fair to promote NM Grown Week with baskets of produce grown in the Pecos elementary school garden.



The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) team partnered with Twin Buttes high school and the district Food Service Director to create a healthy menu for a Family Open House Dinner event featuring NM grown items and produce from the district greenhouse. ZYEP and a handful of students made close to 300 blue and white corn tortillas served as beef and lamb street tacos to 80 attendees. Locally grown green chile, greenhouse zucchini, and lettuce were all showcased with "Pick Me, I'm Local!" stickers.

In Bloomfield, over 200 students at Central Elementary tried a delicious roasted apple and squash dish featuring Kerby Orchard apples and winter squash as well as onions from Elders Greenhouse and Garden. Kaufman Farms put together a brief slideshow highlighting elements of their family farm and Bonnie Hopkins from NM State University Cooperative Extension talked to the students about the rich history of agriculture in San Juan County.

Elementary cafeterias in Portales served produce grown by local farmers and students at James Elementary harvested produce from their own garden, weighed it, and learned how to make vegetable quesadillas - including a cooking lesson and a math lesson on fractions when the quesadillas were cut in triangles. Everyone loved how crunchy and fresh the zucchini was!



HKHC San Ildefonso coordinator Martha Cooke invited the pueblo's Head Start program to attend the local Espanola Farmers' Market on October 14th in celebration of Farm to School month. The Market Manager Sabra Moore provided free children's books and gave \$2 tokens to the preschoolers to spend at the market. As an added bonus, they were able to see the "Biggest Vegetable" and "Best Poem" contests held in honor of Indigenous Peoples' day.



HKHC Colfax County coordinator Emma Green recruited high school culinary arts students to help prep and serve a variety of local fruits and veggies to students at Longfellow Elementary and Ration Intermediate School. Featured products included: butter lettuce and jalapenos from Silver Leaf Farm, red and green cabbage from Cerro Vista Farms, cantaloupe, sweet corn, and carrots from Schwebach Farms, mixed hot peppers and sweet cornito peppers from Freshies Farms, red chile powder from Seco Spice, and an assortment of different apples from Chama River Produce.

Lordsburg schools served green chile during NM Grown Week and, throughout the remainder of the month, served something grown locally and purchased from the Southwest Food Hub. Meanwhile down in Animas, HKHC Hidalgo County coordinator Beth Cox cooked and served locally grown squash, students drew pictures of their favorite fruits and vegetables, and winners from each class received a prize.

At Stout Elementary in Silver City, locally grown watermelons were served to students during school lunch and classroom lessons were provided about how watermelons are grown. HKHC Grant County coordinator Alicia Edwards also partnered with the Grant County Commission, local ranchers, and the 4-H club to create a proclamation celebrating Farm to School Month, New Mexico Grown Week, and National 4-H Week!



HEALTHY KIDS Healthy Preschool

BUILDING HEALTHIER TOMORROWS TODAY

We're excited to announce our statewide Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool (HKHP) initiative is becoming more integrated into our HKHC program! In partnership with the Children, Youth & Families Department, HKHP works with preschool and Head Start providers to support making healthy eating and physical activity a part of their daily routine. HKHP focuses on three main initiatives: 1) establishing and implementing wellness policies to support healthy eating, physical activity, decreased screen time, breastfeeding, and staff wellness; 2) implementing the 4-week HKHP Challenge to increase physical activity to 120 minutes per day and limit screen time to 30 minutes per week; and 3) implementing the 5-week Family 5.2.1.0 Challenge to encourage families to adopt healthy behaviors at home. We'd like to introduce our two HKHP coordinators: Alberto Zavala and Monique Perish!



Greetings! My name is Monique Perish and I'm the HKHP coordinator for northern New Mexico. I have two amazing sons who love to camp, swim, and fish – they know how to keep their mama on her toes!

For over five years, I've worked with the Child and Adult Care Food Program teaching early care and education providers how to serve nutritious meals. This experience has given me the opportunity to help shape healthier futures for our children by creating environments that support healthy eating, exercise, emotional well-being, and self-esteem.

I recently partnered with several centers and Head Start programs during our HKHP Challenge. Providers committed to increasing physical activity to 120 minutes each day and decreasing screen time to 30 minutes or less per week - we really put their preschool wellness policies to the test! Providers tracked their children's physical activity and screen time every day for four weeks and engaged families in the Challenge once a week. Super Pre-K's are what I called them at the end! We created fun and memorable moments by making small adjustments a little at a time. Children made their own cars for races, learned new songs and dances, and played games they could share with their families at home.



Everyone had positive feedback, enjoyed increased activity and family engagement, and barely noticed they had reduced their screen time! All I can say is **WAY TO GO!** It makes me so proud to do this work. Thank you to all early care and education providers for the difference you make in the lives of children, families, and staff.

Did you Know?

We collect and report annual data on the number of organizations, individuals, and programs* that help us accomplish our work across the state. In 2019, we counted 647 unique partners! Equally impressive, HKHC efforts reached 29,568 children and over 266,500 adults and elderly this past year.

*do not receive funding from our program



Hi, everyone! My name is Alberto Zavala, HKHP coordinator for southern New Mexico! I work in partnership with state agencies, preschools, and Head Start programs to establish and implement wellness policies and other best practices to

promote health and childhood obesity prevention.

This season has been busy for early childcare centers in our state ever since the school year started! I'd like to highlight the success of Eastern Plains Community Action Agency (EPCAA) at all six Head Start locations, including the HKHC communities of Clovis, Portales, Santa Rosa, and Anton Chico! We worked together to create and implement their new preschool wellness policy, which contains healthy eating and physical activity practices to optimize children's health, fitness, and wellness as well as family engagement and staff wellness strategies.

More than 100 staff members attended an implementation training at the Clovis Convention Center and received resources, tools, and support to bring their wellness policy to life in the classroom. After almost a year of implementing their policy, EPCAA improved their services in eight different areas, from encouraging families to reduce screen time to providing nutrition and physical activity education to staff and families. EPCAA has over 680 children enrolled in their Head Start programs, all of whom receive the benefits of these improvements!

EPCAA also participated in our HKHP Challenge to reduce screen time, increase physical activity, and foster family engagement. They received a Gold Award at the Child and Adult Care Food Program Conference in Albuquerque for completing the Challenge and were recognized for the great work they're doing at all their locations.

I look forward to partnering with HKHC coordinators across the state to create brighter and healthier futures for New Mexico's children and families!

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Fresh Produce to Supplement Meals for NM Elderly

This past year, the state legislature passed two appropriations to help increase food access for the elderly. The first provided \$50,000 to fund procurement of locally grown produce for senior meals in a handful of counties, including the HKHC counties of San Juan and Socorro. The second appropriation allowed for a \$100,000 expansion of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program so additional \$25-\$50 checks could be distributed to seniors for use at approved farmers' markets across the state. The funding wasn't made available until the end of September when most markets were beginning to wind down for the season. A HUGE thanks to HKHC coordinators in Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo and Chaves, Grant, San Juan, and Socorro counties for distributing a good chunk of these checks to senior centers in time for seniors to actually use them!



Planting a Vision at San Antonio Elementary

When the new San Antonio elementary school was built in 2015, David Hunter, the 3rd - 4th grade math and science teacher, had a grand vision of a vibrant and welcoming garden. He wanted to create an environment that would nurture students, staff, and the greater community, foster a real connection to nature and the outdoors, and blend seamlessly into the surrounding terrain. The village of San Antonio, near the Bosque del Apache south of Socorro, is a small farming community where many residents grow a variety of fruits and veggies, chile, and alfalfa. With backing from leadership, Mr. Hunter hopes to transform the school grounds into a place that reflects the local farming culture and cultivates positive healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

To guide his vision, Mr. Hunter partnered with school principal Joe Dennis, HKHC Socorro County coordinator Joel Partridge, and a handful of community members to create a detailed multi-phase landscaping plan. During the first phase, concrete garden beds were built outside each classroom so teachers could incorporate gardening into their curriculum more easily, support a connection to the natural environment, and educate students about where their food comes from. When the new school opened in 2016, the bones of what would become a robust gardening program were in place.



Phase 1: classroom garden beds

Naturally, the next step was to form a gardening club comprised of students, parents, and San Antonio community members. As the club grew, parents began writing to Mr. Hunter with stories of how their child's participation was benefitting their home lives. One parent garden volunteer remarked: *"It was great to see the change in attitude throughout the program. At first, the kids did not seem too keen on the idea of shoveling manure and soil, weeding the beds, and raking the ground around the beds. You could tell they were expecting instant gratification. Once the seeds were planted and the first sprouts started to appear, we had interest from students who were not in the club. Once they saw their hard work was paying off, more children wanted to become involved. We were able to send veggies home with students, sell some at the local farmers market, and use this as a lesson to become self-sustainable."*

The gardening club is currently shouldering the bulk of the work maintaining the garden beds, but students in each classroom are beginning to take more responsibility, too. Teachers are also using them to supplement math, science, and health lessons and to teach their students about gardening and composting. To ease the burden of regular watering, the school raised funds through a 5K run and monthly movie nights for a timed drip irrigation system, which now provides water to the garden beds and a new row of Afghan pine trees planted along the fence line.

This past summer, Joel worked with Mr. Dennis to design easily removable hoop covers for every bed and is helping the school raise money to buy materials to build them. The covers will extend the growing season and allow students to begin planting seeds in the area set aside for a traditional medicine herb garden. The school also invested in a classroom hydroponic garden for 3rd and 4th graders to learn about indoor plants and the growing process throughout the school year.

Apart from the raised garden beds and Afghan pines, the new San Antonio elementary campus is a blank slate. The landscaping plan will be implemented in phases as the school raises funds to grow their vision into reality. Upcoming plans include partnering with students and the greater community to paint the concrete garden beds with colorful murals, plant a fruit tree orchard, and begin planting the traditional medicine garden. The core values on which the landscape vision is based include teaching children to help and be accountable to one another, work together, be kind, and create a feeling of home. Joel is proud of the work that's already taken place and is hopeful the momentum will continue: "the San Antonio school community has bought into the vision and everyone participates. They're willing to jump in and try new things to improve the school and learning environment for the students. It gives me great pleasure and a sense of real accomplishment working with them!"

Growing Sustainability and Community Ownership

Last January, Healthy Kids Healthy Communities was the recipient of Whole Foods Market's Community Giving Day, which generated \$13,400 in funding for projects that support access to healthy, affordable food and places to be physically active. HKHC communities are also growing their capacity to proactively identify and apply for grant opportunities as they arise. Since January 2019, HKHC communities have been awarded a variety of funding to advance and help sustain healthy eating, physical activity, and wellness initiatives at the local level, and we'd like to recognize them for it!



Congratulations to:

Chaves County, who received \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to revamp and expand the edible garden at Nancy Lopez Elementary.

Colfax County, who received \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding for basketball court and garden beautification, including new fruit trees, and a sensory hallway at Raton Intermediate School.

Curry County, who received \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to build a new hoop house at Grady Elementary to be used for classroom education, fruit and vegetable tastings, and supplying produce to the cafeteria.

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Grant County, who received: 1) \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to create a pollinator/vegetable garden at the Santa Clara senior center; 2) a Farm to School grant, \$1,125 of which will be used for local food tastings; 3) funding through the Silver City Fire Department to distribute 75 bicycle helmets during a local Pedalista! event; and 4) a grant through the Village of Santa Clara to provide a rubber surface for the Santa Clara Splash Park, an open space for children to be physically active.



Guadalupe County, who received \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to install a salad bar and plant an edible garden at Santa Rosa Elementary.

Hidalgo County, who received \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to implement nutrition education, food preparation, and cooking classes for Animas students.

Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, who received: 1) \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to purchase a physical activity cart and promote active classroom celebrations as an alternative to sweet treats at the Ohkay Owingeh Community School; and 2) 30 seed packets valued at \$97.50 through the Native Seed grant to expand the community and school gardens. Seeds will also be saved for the pueblo's seed bank and used in future gardening projects.

Roosevelt County, who received: 1) \$1,110 in Walmart Foundation funding to refurbish the greenhouse at Elida Elementary; 2) \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to create a sensory hallway at Floyd Elementary, add trees to the James elementary school garden, and build a new door for the greenhouse at Elida Elementary; 3) \$2,500 through a NM Grow Project grant to establish a raised bed garden and hydroponic system at Elida Elementary; and 4) \$1,225 through a City of Portales Clean and Beautiful grant to add 12 raised bed gardens at James Elementary.

San Ildefonso Pueblo, who received: 1) \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding for materials to support children's physical education and activity, nutrition education, and garden implementation; and 2) \$20,000 in Department of Energy funds and \$87,379 (including a \$11,000 local match) through the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to support walking and biking throughout the pueblo.

Socorro County, who received \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to expand the San Antonio elementary school garden to include an orchard, traditional medicine herb garden, drip irrigation, and hoop covers.

Zuni Pueblo, who received: 1) \$800 in Whole Foods Community Giving Day funding to implement the Healthy Kids 5.2.1.O Challenge and "Eat a Rainbow" Challenge for preschool and elementary students; 2) a \$2,000 Target grant to support the youth soccer team; 3) a \$25,000 Newman's Own Native Nutrition grant to expand the garden at Ho'n A:wam Community Park; 4) \$25,000 through the Native American Agriculture Fund to educate young Zuni farmers about traditional Zuni agriculture; 5) \$25,000 in San Manuel Band of Mission Indians funding to support the Summer Camp and Performance Academy sports activities; and 6) \$16,000 from the Con Alma Health Foundation to formalize a storytelling strategic plan that increases opportunities for community members to define health in culturally relevant ways.

*Correction on Summer 2019 newsletter: The San Ildefonso Pueblo's Recreation Plan has not yet been approved by the tribal council as of this writing.

It's a Date! San Juan Farmers and Institutions Connect over Local Food

Ever been speed dating? The farmers in northwestern New Mexico have thanks to Patience Williams, HKHC San Juan County coordinator, and the Northwest New Mexico (NWNM) Buy Fresh Buy

Local Chapter, who jointly hosted a recent farmer-buyer networking event. Modeled after speed dating, the event allowed local entities interested in purchasing local produce to sit down for a brief time with San Juan county farmers and discuss produce needs for the upcoming growing season.

For the first gathering of its kind, participation was surprisingly high: preschools, senior centers, local restaurants, six different farms, and all four San Juan county school districts showed up! Each farmer came to their "date" with a list of items they produce while each entity came prepared with a list of items they would be interested in purchasing.

These conversations are an extremely important part of a farmer's production planning process, which covers the nuts and bolts of how their farm operation will have the capacity to grow enough to sell at market and supply local schools and entities with fresh produce.

A new commercial composting company also attended the event and, with help from the NWNM Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter, will soon partner with the local schools to collect their food waste, turn it into compost, and send it back out to local farmers - an initiative that's been a long time coming in San Juan county!



Speed "date" in progress

Due to this initial success, the NWNM Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter plans to hold at least one such networking event each year moving forward.

The NWNM Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter was created through the Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance grant awarded to Farmington in 2018 to support locally led community-driven efforts to boost economic opportunities for farmers and businesses, improve access to health local food, and promote childhood wellness. Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters are working to rebuild local food systems and promote sustainable agriculture by connecting consumers in communities throughout the country to fresh, locally grown and produced foods. Since 2002, Buy Fresh Buy Local programs have been implemented by over 100 regional and local chapters across the country.