



Healthy Kids **Healthy Communities**

BUILDING HEALTHIER TOMORROWS

Healthy Kids San Ildefonso Pueblo

One young mother in San Ildefonso Pueblo knew she had to do something to prevent her sons from becoming obese. She watched as Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso posted trail signs and cleaned up the dirt path near her home. When the trail was ready, she began walking on it each evening with her family.

That is the goal of the Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso Initiative – to make it easier for children and their families to be physically active and choose healthy foods in their community.

In this small pueblo about 20 miles north of Santa Fe, Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso is partnering with the Bureau of Indian Education's Day School, a community farm and tribal government programs to promote the pueblo's trails, get children walking to school and increase children's nutrition education and access to healthy foods.

And the efforts are making a difference. The young mom's boys are no longer considered pre-obese. Community members are walking more. Children are choosing to drink more water and eat more fruits and vegetables.

To make lasting changes in San Ildefonso, a pueblo with about 1,500 members and 20,000 visitors each year, Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso is trying to bring back the community's tradition of walking.

Key Community Successes

October 2011 - June 2013

- Established, promoted and launched nearly 10 miles of new interconnecting trails
- Installed mileage markers and maps indicating 7 trail routes named according to color
- Launched Walking Wednesdays
- Established partnership with community farm and language program to teach children about nutrition and growing vegetables
- Provided regular fruit and vegetable tastings to elementary school students
- Elementary school participated in the 5.2.1.0 Challenge this past year
- Partnered with transportation planner to widen 2 main community roads to accommodate pedestrians and bikers

All (1,500) residents have access to physical activity opportunities via an extensive network of interconnecting walking and biking trails

100% of elementary school students (~50 students) have increased healthy eating and physical activity opportunities

After surveying pueblo members, Summer Martinez, coordinator of Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso, realized they weren't aware of the almost 10 miles of connected paths that reach the entire community. She worked with volunteers to post signs indicating routes and mileage for the seven dirt paths. They distributed maps that identify community landmarks along the color-coded paths that cross through the main village and across the Rio Grande.



The next step was promotion. Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso arranged special events featuring each trail so walkers, runners and bikers could cruise the trails together. Tribal Council member Galen Martinez said he participates in community activities that Healthy Kids hosts.



"I see a lot more running and walking than I have in the past," said Martinez, who grew up in San Ildefonso and is not related to Summer Martinez. "I think that comes from the hiking trails and the awareness they have created."

Beyond promoting trails, Summer Martinez is trying to make the pueblo safer for pedestrians and bikers. She is working with a transportation planner to widen two main roads to accommodate bike lanes and more shoulder space for people to ride safely next to motorized traffic.



Healthy Kids' goal of establishing physical activity as a habit extends to the entire family. The initiative has arranged for children to walk to the San Ildefonso Day School once a week. It has become a way for the community to be active together as they start their day. Children are seeing their community leaders model the importance of walking as they join students every week. For some, it's a return to childhood rituals.

When Galen Martinez attended San Ildefonso Day School in the 1970s, he walked every day from his house in the plaza to the nearby school. Now he is walking with his 8-year-old granddaughter and 7-year-old grandson during walk-to-school Wednesdays.

“Walking kids in the morning and seeing councilors take the time to do that, it makes other people think they should be involved,” Martinez said. “The kids can see people do care about them and their future.”

It took some effort to launch walking Wednesday. Some pointed out the federal Bureau of Indian Education’s policy for all kids to be transported door-to-door to and from school. Parents were concerned about stray dogs that roam the area.

Summer Martinez arranged for kids who live outside of the pueblo to meet at two designated areas on either side of the pueblo and then walk together to pick up children at their homes. Then she rallied a big group of volunteers, including school staff, parents, law enforcement and tribal councilors, so the program would be sustainable.

“We have a good principal and great teachers who are excited and understand where we’re coming from when we try to promote health,” Martinez said. “It all started with talking to parents about walking. And it’s actually been a great hit.”



To achieve the other goal of Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso -- increasing access to healthy foods – Martinez has partnered with the community farm to show children how to grow vegetables. Students from the Day School plant and harvest traditional crops of beans, squash and corn. The farm provides the freshly grown produce to pueblo elders and traditional leaders.

Education is a key component too, and Martinez makes sure she incorporates pueblo culture into all of her health education. Twice a week she teaches the Health Honor Wisdom curriculum to children at the Day School. One of the farm mentors translates Martinez’ words into Tewa, the pueblo’s language, when she teaches students about farming and nutrition.

“We try to help our kids understand that health is something they should worry about now, not when they are 20,” Martinez said. “If they learn healthy habits now, they will follow them the rest of their life. They will remember.”

When teaching about healthy eating, she focuses on simple changes, noting that the children pass their knowledge to their parents. She shows correct portion sizes and examples of healthy, colorful plates of food. In everything, she tries to connect the children's education to their families.



“Changes need to be made at home because the mothers buy the food,” she said. “I ask the kids, ‘How can you make a difference and help your mama make healthy choices?’”

So they say they’ll go with her to the store. A lot of my parents have come up to me – my friends, neighbors, people I grew up with – and they tell me their kids are asking for more fruit and water.”

Day School Principal Dolores Guzman has supported Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso’s work, noting that the school emphasizes healthy eating and exercise more now that Martinez teaches the students and works with the cafeteria to offer healthier choices.

“I hope it has an impact at home,” Guzman said. “I’m hoping we’ll see more children being involved in outside activities instead of inside.”

Martinez sees changes. She credits Healthy Kids Healthy San Ildefonso’s work in partnership with the tribal Health and Human Services Division, which has several programs trying to help families lead healthier lives.

“We have a few families who have made changes and have sustained them, and you can see it in the health of the parents and the health of the kids,” she said. “Those are successes we celebrate.”