

Hello to our partners and friends across the state! We are looking forward to upcoming fall activities -- students participating in Walk & Roll to school events across the state and state officials celebrating our NM Grown participants with a special in-person ceremony.

The Obesity, Nutrition & Physical Activity (ONAPA) team was delighted to join Healthy Kids Healthy Communities coordinators for our annual July training. Thank you to Healthy Kids San Juan County Coordinator Patience Williams for arranging our tours and meeting locations.



The Healthy Kids Healthy Communities team with PED partners & ONAPA staff at the July training in Farmington

We loved hearing from our coordinators about the work they do. Becky Joyce of Healthy Kids Chaves County told us how she plans her Walk & Roll events. Alicia Edwards gave us ideas for how to develop a bike club, and we learned about promoting NM Grown on Nuevo Thursdays from Cassandra Hartley, the other half of Healthy Kids Grant County's powerful coordinator duo. We also got a great overview of Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool's work by Alberto Zavala. Thank you for your contributions!

We appreciate our partners in PED attending and helping us understand the new rules for Healthy Universal School Meals as well as the Outdoor Recreation Division informing us of grant opportunities.

And finally, we had fun exploring Growing Forward Farm as well as two edible school gardens: Animas Elementary School's garden with Student Nutrition Director Marie Johnson, and A Gold Star Academy's garden at one of our Farm to Preschool pilot sites, thanks to owner Barbara Tedrow.

News & Events

Welcome to our new Northern Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool Coordinator, Michelle Chavez! An



Albuquerque native, Michelle joins HKHP after working in early childhood education for 19 years, including 16 as director of Precious Moments Learning Center, where her two granddaughters currently attend. We are happy you're a part of the HKHP team!

Save the Date!

Please join us (*invitation and RSVP required*) at the **Golden Chile Award Ceremony** from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Oct. 24 at Albuquerque's Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. A tour of the Center's Entrepreneurial Complex starts at 2 p.m. followed by a 3 p.m. ceremony and reception.

Upcoming Stories

- Garden kits & HKHP recruitment
- Golden Chile awards
- BMI surveillance



Healthy Preschools

Increasing opportunities for healthy eating & physical activity in preschool settings



Families Learn Healthy Habits with Family 5.2.1.0 Challenge

Congratulations to all the preschoolers and their families who practiced healthy lifestyle behaviors at home during the four-week Family 5.2.1.0 Challenge! Healthy Kids Healthy Preschool (HKHP) Coordinator Alberto Zavala reports that more than 600 kids from 18 preschools participated in the challenge this year. The HKHP Program provides the preschools with a five-book series of Dinky books in which characters promote the four goals of the challenge.

- Yazzie Bear: Eat **5** or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Carlita Coyote: Trim screen time to **2** hours or less a day.
- Betty Bobcat: Be physically active at least **1** hour a day.
- Hop Rabbit: Drink lots of H₂O every day.

The 5.2.1.0 Challenge helped Adrian Lopez, a preschooler at the New Mexico Children First Learning Center in Sunland Park, learn about the importance of moving his body and eating vegetables that help him be strong, said his mom Amaris Lopez. His family swapped screen time for bike rides, and Adrian tried new vegetables like broccoli.



Adrian Lopez, 4, rides his bike instead of playing on his tablet.

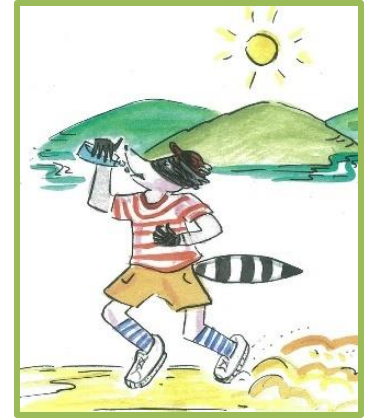
After the Challenge, his family set a goal to be active outdoors two to three times a week and eat more homecooked meals and less processed food. Amaris preps a week's worth of dinners on Sunday so they are easy to grab and cook on busy weeknights.

"It's really awesome that they offer something like this for families, to educate us about being healthy," Amaris said. "I think it was the start of something new for us and something we've kept going to this day."

Juan Ramirez's classroom was one of three participating in the Challenge at the Learning Center. He created a binder for each student to organize the weekly family surveys as well as read each survey to better understand their challenges to eating healthy and being active. "The more you know them, the more you can help them through the years," he said.

Juan communicated with parents about the daily physical and nutrition activities students enjoyed. One of their favorites was reading about the little raccoon named Dinky. "The kids really identify with him and the stories," Juan said. "Sometimes it's way better to explain things through a book."

Juan sent home materials and reminders to maintain families' momentum for 21 days, including preparing families to keep up with the Challenge during spring break. Since this was his second year introducing the Challenge to families, he said he could better explain the goals and give them ideas to reach those goals. Out of 16 enrolled families in Juan's classroom, 14 completed the Challenge! Two families tried but couldn't finish due to sickness and travel. Bravo to all the families who were willing to try and incorporate new, healthy habits in their lives!



Preschoolers like learning about healthy habits from Dinky and his friends.

I think the challenge is very valuable. I feel like it helped families work together in after-school hours. It's motivated the parents, too. I'm ready for next year!

-- Juan Ramirez, teacher at New Mexico Children First Learning Center



Coordinator Corner

Government Guidance with Alicia Edwards



Healthy Kids Grant County Coordinator Alicia Edwards is in her 8th year as Grant County Commissioner. Here, she offers advice on connecting with elected officials, presenting at public meetings, and getting proclamations approved.
Contact: alicia@hkhcgrantcounty.org



Grant County commissioners have passed proclamations for such issues as School Lunch Hero Day, NM Grown Week/Month, National Nutrition Month, Farm to School Month and Walk and Roll to School Month, thanks to Alicia's leadership and diligence.

Alicia is a big believer in the power of proclamations as an awareness tool. "This is going to be read out to the public in the meeting. It says that local government supports that work," she explained.

She fills the "Whereas" section of the proclamation with information about why the issue matters, such as the importance of school lunches and the people who serve them for a proclamation declaring School Lunch Hero Day.

To get started, look up proclamations online or review Alicia's examples on the [HKHC Google Drive](#). Alicia has adapted other community's proclamations to fit Grant County.

When you have a draft proclamation, ask a councilor or commissioner to sponsor it, then get on the agenda to present the proclamation during a public meeting. If your proclamation is tied to an event, make sure you report back on the event (ex: Walk & Roll to School, Color Run) at a future meeting. And most importantly, reach out to Alicia if you need any help navigating your local government!

Building connections with elected officials:

- Do your research. Review voting records and campaign websites. Read city and county websites and bios of elected officials. See what they care about.
- Talk to people you know and ones who would be open to your message (based on their bio). People running for election are always more interested.
- Call and follow up with an email (ex: I left you a message. I want to meet with you about what HKHC does in your community). Maybe call 3-4 days later.
- If no response after 2 weeks, try another person.
- If you can't schedule an individual meeting, make a request to be on the agenda and do a presentation.

Meeting tips:

- Be prepared. Provide a one-pager (front and back) fact sheet with pictures, data and a business card.
- Tell them three eye-opening data points (ex: Alicia uses data about kids not getting enough to eat).
- Thanking is critical. Send a note, ideally handwritten.

Presentation tips:

- Bring a partner to observe who is interested.
- Everyone loses interest after 5-7 minutes. Speak about the most important info first.



Farm to Preschool Pilot Program

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



Clovis Preschool Integrates Garden into Program

The garden hosts a treasure hunt whenever kids get their turn to check on their preschool’s 14 garden beds – heads bow to the dirt, eyes searching for a hint of red or green or maybe purple, one of the new potato varieties that they like to munch raw at snack time or take home to their families. The children’s delight in each green tomato that ripens red is one of the reasons Director Ashleigh Tackett says the garden is no longer just an extension of their curriculum at Future Generations in Clovis; it’s integrated into their entire program.

“Our garden is part of us,” said Ashleigh. “It’s part of our routine all year; we are always planning, discussing, cleaning, planting, harvesting. We would miss it if it was gone.”

Future Generations has incorporated gardening on and off since 2010, including bringing students to the community garden Healthy Kids Curry County helped establish behind Presbyterian Hospital. Becoming one of ONAPA’s eight Farm to Preschool pilot sites was a welcome opportunity for her and her staff to expand their gardening program into all aspects of their programs for 170 students.



“Farm to Preschool has really helped us take the garden to the next level with key elements of shade, water and family engagement,” Ashleigh said.

Today, Future Generation’s 6,500-square-foot outdoor classroom has 14 garden beds, three peach trees, a drip system and shade structures that extend the children’s outdoor learning time. Families help on planting day, participate in tastings and happily accept extra plants and produce from the garden that their kids water and weed.

“Trying new vegetables is the big thing to families,” Ashleigh said. They’ll say, ‘I can’t

believe my child will eat that.’ We can have a salad on our lunch menu and maybe half the kids will eat it. If we take them out to the garden and show them it’s the same food, they all eat it.”

On days when the school infuses water with strawberries, mint or cucumber, the kids drink twice as much, and some still infuse water with mint at home after Future Generations gave students take-home mint plants and an infusion tumbler.

Participating in Farm to Preschool helped Future Generations connect to the NM Grown Program and local growers, including Eric Nelson from Nelson Farms, who gave them gardening tips in addition to freshly grown food. “It was not something we knew about before, and of course we want to support our farmers,” Ashleigh said. “We’re growing for our future generations.”

Thank you, community partners!

Zandy Bunch of ICAN

Nelson Farm in Pleasant Hill

Healthy Kids Healthy Communities

Veggie Shack

Carpenter Farms

JD Bell of Clovis

Diana Wood, NMSU Curry Co. Extension



Physical Activity

Increasing opportunities for children & families to be physically active



Flexibility Is Key in Supporting Walking & Rolling

Coordinators in Healthy Kids Healthy Communities (HKHC) are getting creative across New Mexico as they promote walking and rolling to school while adapting to such challenges as limited sidewalks, busy highways, and parents accustomed to driving in their rural communities. About 1,660 students from 15 schools in HKHC counties walked and rolled to/at school in October of school year 2023-2024.



In some places, police departments block roads and escort groups of children to school while other schools opt for on-campus walking around their gym or playground, or biking and scootering around their track!

Healthy Kids Hidalgo County incorporated walking into a county event that included games, gift drawings, booths and speakers as about 50 kids walked around a track. It's fun to see how coordinators adapt to their school and community needs to get children walking and rolling!

Here is some helpful information from HKHC coordinators about how to plan a successful Walk & Roll Day.

Tips for Success

Chaves: Plan ahead! Let schools choose what's best for them & register them at www.walkbiketoschool.org. Enlist coaches, teachers and volunteers to take pictures and cheer on kids.

Colfax: Get principal buy-in and make it fun with music & free play after, if possible.

Guadalupe: Stay positive and make it fun and engaging! Provide promotional items.

Roosevelt: Adapt to the school – every school chooses the time, day and location.



Communication

Chaves: Remind schools a month before, send info/talk to newspaper and radio station to inform community, and post on Facebook page several times before the event.

Colfax: Send flyers home to parents two weeks before the event.

Guadalupe: Create a Facebook event to notify the community.

Roosevelt: Follow-up matters. Afterwards, make & send collages with pictures to principals, teachers, superintendent and other school staff as needed.

Thank you, partners!

Healthy Kids Chaves County

Roswell Police and Fire Depts.

School staff & superintendents in Dexter, Hagerman, Lake Arthur & Roswell

NM Department of Health (DOH)

Military Institute

XCEL Energy

The mayor of Roswell

Healthy Kids Colfax County

City of Ratón employees

Ratón's Police Department

Ratón Intermediate School staff

Healthy Kids Guadalupe County

Christus St. Vincent Hospital

NM Brain Injury Advisory Council

NMDOH

NM Department of Transportation

Healthy Kids Roosevelt County

Debbie Gentry of DOH in Portales

ICAN educator Carol Calderon

Floyd & Elida schools

James & Valencia schools



In Healthy Kids Roosevelt County, kids walk laps around their gym or playground, depending on weather. Teachers love the annual sign Coordinator Caron Powers makes for their special walking day.