31,500 Students Get Fit as SODI Expands

More exercise and fewer French fries. That's one of the messages that Northridge Hospital Medical Center's School-based Obesity and Diabetes Initiative (SODI) is spreading to students and their parents within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). In these schools, about 25 percent of students in grades five, seven and nine are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

"Our hope is to change students' eating behaviors and improve physical fitness," explains Bonnie Bailer, Director, Center for Healthier Communities. "To reach our goal, we've facilitated an active collaboration between teachers, staff, parents, and community partners."



Heberto and Carla Aguirre attend a Good Cooking workshop at Burton Elementary School in Panorama City with their baby and 3-year-old son Alexander.

"Since attending the class, we look more closely at food labels. We choose bread with more fiber and cut back on sodium." he remarks. Since children often model their parents' behavior, Heberto and Carla also bring their 9-month-old daughter and 3-year-old son to the cooking classes and regularly take the entire family to the park for exercise. "The class is important because it has helped our family to be healthy."



SODI was launched in 2006 when Northridge Hospital's Center for Healthier Communities teamed up with LAUSD to target five schools in District One's underserved areas of North Hills and Panorama City. In 2008, the initiative expanded to serve 18

campuses. Over the next three years, SODI will double its outreach to 31,500 students in 36 schools thanks to a grant of nearly \$600,000 from Pacificare/

"The common thread throughout is the emphasis on improving nutrition, increasing physical fitness and also encouraging role models, adds Janis Lake, a registered nurse and organization facilitator for LAUSD.

The response has been positive from everyone involved, including parents who participate in SODI's Good Cooking workshops hosted by the Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles.

Heberto Aguirre and his wife Carla attend cooking classes at Burton Elementary School in Panorama City, where two of their four children go to school.

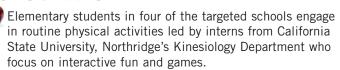


SODI walking groups, like this one held at Noble Avenue Elementary School and facilitated by Valley Care Community Consortium, have been proven to improve cardiovascular fitness ratings and lower body fat and weight.

SCORE BOARD

SODI is a win-win for students, parents, teachers, and staff.

STUDENTS



- Bonus Points! 450 fifth graders' scores improved on the annual California FITNESSGRAM test (Way to go kids!).

Students will soon receive pedometers to track their own progress.

Students can track their FITNESSGRAM progress on computers that will soon be installed in schools along with software dedicated to providing students with individualized fitness and nutrition plans.

Schools lacking resources have received top-notch physical education equipment purchased with a Nike-Go grant and Center for Disease Control funding.

Students who need fitness help can visit an obesity clinic, established within the Student Health Clinic at a participating high school.

PARENTS

Parents learn the ABCs of physical activity and weight management through workshops conducted by Northridge Hospital.

Parents can track their body mass index (BMI) using medical scales that will be in all participating parent centers

Parents get moving during walking groups facilitated by the Valley Care Community Consortium.

The Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles hosts bilingual Good Cooking workshops for parents who also receive free cholesterol tests compliments of Northridge Hospital's CardioVascular Center and free breast and colon cancer presentations compliments of the Hospital's Navigator program.

- Bonus Points! The workshop has been such a success that 50 percent of the 180 participants to date have collectively lost more than 330 pounds.
- Food for Thought "During the SODI pilot program, we learned that parents who participate in campus-based nutrition classes are more successful in helping their children lose weight," explains Bonnie. "Many parents in the community work long hours and need help learning to make nutritious meals quickly and on a budget."

TEACHERS

Teachers shape up during the American Cancer Society's Active for Life program activities offered on school campuses.

Teachers are also trained to boost student activity levels by providing a structured physical fitness curriculum.

- Bonus Points! Nearly 150 teachers have improved their ability to manage stress by attending workshops led by the American Society for Training and Development.



Pacificare/UnitedHealthcare presents a \$593,720 grant to the Northridge Hospital Foundation to further its School-based Obesity and Diabetes Initiative. (I-r) Pat Pelletier, Principal, Sepulveda Middle School; Michael L. Wall, President, Northridge Hospital; Jean Brown, Superintendent, LAUSD, District One; Dave Anderson, CEO, UnitedHealthcare of Southern California; and Bonnie Bailer, Director, Center for Healthier Communities.