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Obesity prevention project targets Delano youth

Youth from the Delano Sports and Technology Summer Academy joined the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program at Fresno State in a project where they learned how their environment is related to obesity and overweight.

Participants identified environmental challenges to healthy eating and physical activity and discovered ways that the environment can be changed to address these issues.

Over the past month, youth evaluated the Delano community and took pictures of the positive and negative things they witnessed. Statements accompanied each picture reflecting the youths' views and suggestions for changes.

Lorena Ramos, lead coordinator of the undertaking called Photovoice Project, provided disposable cameras to youth ages 6 to 15. She said the images and comments they recorded will be used to promote dialogue among community stakeholders and decision-makers.

"They were really young and when I saw the pictures I was impressed," explained Ramos.

Along with other participants, Breanna Rodriguez discovered places where people were throwing trash on the ground, creating an unpleasant environment for others. "It makes our city dirty when there is trash," she said.

Breanna encourages the city of Delano to create signs and place trash cans so residents have fewer excuses to discard trash on the ground.

The youth also discovered that junk food was being sold at a cheaper price than healthy food, making it difficult for residents to eat nutritiously, and that some Delano parks did not have working water faucets and toilets, creating challenges for physical activity.

Findings from the project were shared with Delano City Council members July 16.

“The Photovoice Project was a powerful tool allowing youth to have a voice about the changes that they would like to see in their communities,” said Genoveva Islas-Hooker, project coordinator for the Regional Obesity Prevention Program. She added that the project also provides information to leaders on “issues that need to be addressed to help stem our obesity epidemic,”

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program at California State University, Fresno plans to expand the youth Photovoice Project to additional communities in the central San Joaquin Valley.

Related link: Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program

About the Academy

The Delano Sports and Technology Summer Academy was established in spring to keep kids busy, productive and in a positive environment.

“The academy was created on a Sunday afternoon, when I called my colleague and asked if she would support this program if it came to the City Council for approval,” explained Sam Ramirez, a Delano councilmember.

Approximately 230 youth have participated in this year’s summer program activities: computers, dance, basketball, track, volleyball, art and karate.

Ramirez believes that the program is a positive investment for the city and helps kids stay away from risky behaviors such as “experimenting with drugs and unplanned teenage pregnancy.”

“Many of the kids serve as babysitters to their younger brothers or sisters while the parents are at work, so for them to be a kid and enjoy something like karate or art makes the city of Delano’s investment well worth it,” Ramirez said.

About the Regional Obesity Prevention Program

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) is the Central California Public Health Partnership’s three-year initiative to reduce disparities in obesity and diabetes in the San Joaquin Valley. CCROPP’s goal is to improve social and physical environments for healthy nutrition and physical activity through advocacy, policy and system change.

The regional obesity prevention program is administered by the Central California Center for Health and Human Services and is housed under the College of Health and Human Services at Fresno State. The project is funded by a grant from The California Endowment.
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