

Sports for Achieving Wellness

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: An age-old proverb reads, “It takes a community/village to raise a child”. The purpose of this project was to utilize sports as a vehicle to promote healthy community development. **Methods:** Targeting the Southeast quadrant of Houston, Texas and using multiple community centers we initiated futsal (indoor soccer) team play for girls and boys ages 6 to 18. Each participant’s height, weight, physical activity, medical/athletic injury history and family health history was documented and assessed. Before, during and after game play we offered a festival atmosphere with music, zumba, nutritional tips and commissioned health professionals to consult the parents, siblings and players. **Results:** We were able to communicate and consult directly to an age demographic ranging from 6 to 62 about the epidemic of childhood obesity and its effects within the Latino community. 90% of the grandparents, parents, players and siblings participated in either playing futsal, zumba, dancing or visited our health professional booths, with only 10% opting to only sit and watch game play. Results were unaffected by the facilitating community centers. **Conclusions:** Results suggest that by utilizing specific activities of interests (soccer, organized youth sports); catering to the visual, auditory and/or hands-on (physical) participation of our target group we sparked interest, awareness and opposed obesity and sedentary lifestyles.

KEY WORDS: Sports, Community, Wellness, Lifestyle, Nutrition