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## Nutrition Program Leads to Healthier Families

The City of Perris wrapped up a four-week “Chef in the Classroom” program for elementary school children and their parents, who praised the effort for raising their awareness about food choices and making healthy eating fun.

This finale at Val Verde Elementary School this week included testimonials from several parents who detailed menus and practices learned during the Wednesday morning sessions, which drew between 40 and 80 adults and students.

Perris Administrative Services Manager Isabel Carlos and City health educator Marisela Magana thanked the families for spending a part of their summer vacation learning life lessons.

“It’s an absolute pleasure to be with you here today,” said Carlos, who prepared a rainbow coleslaw snack for the crowd. “You are on your ways to healthier lives.”



Perris health educator Marisela Magana instructs Val Verde Elementary School student David Sanchez, 9, about the proper amount of cereal to pour into a bowl for a healthy meal.

Magana said the nutrition awareness program is part of the ongoing Live Well Perris healthy-eating active-living campaign, which encourages residents to nix high-salt and sugary foods for fruits and vegetables and take up exercising to improve their quality of life. Live Well Perris has earned national, state and regional awards for its community-engagement efforts.

“This is what I love to do!” Magana said.

Magana called Val Verde students Tiarie Edmond, 11, and David Sanchez, 9, to the front of the audience and invited them to help prepare the coleslaw. The dish consisted of red and green cabbage, red bell pepper, red onion, red vinegar, fat-free mayonnaise, carrots and low-fat cheddar cheese. The combination made for a crunchy, crisp and tart snack.

“It’s a fun, quick and easy recipe you can make at home,” she said.

Throughout the lesson, Magana reminded the class of useful tips for good shopping and cooking choices--make a list, read labels, select high-fiber and whole-grains, make snacks from fruit and unsalted nuts and freeze fruit and fruit juice into tasty dessert bars.



Perris health educator Marisela Magana and Tiarie Edmond, 11, review the ingredients and nutritional value on a cereal box during a lesson at Val Verde Elementary School this week.

Audience members chimed in about their own methods to improve the family menu. One mom said she used whole-wheat pizza dough, another opts for whole-grain pancake batter sweetened with bananas and cinnamon, a third uses whole-grain noodles to cook macaroni and cheese while a fourth substituted fat-free milk without her kids noticing.

Rosa Edmond said her family has taken to heart the lessons learned at the Val Verde classes. She’s dropped 15 pounds. Her daughters have lost weight and attend regular Zumba lessons. She’s learned how to incorporate vegetables into the family diet.

“I’m turning them on to squash!” Edmond said. “I didn’t know how to cook healthy until I started attending these classes. I love the City of Perris for what it’s doing to help us live better lives.”

Val Verde student Julio Acosta, 11, used the lessons to cook tortilla soup, stuffed peppers with chicken and chili-pepper stuffed with tuna. He’s learned to shop for ingredients and he likes it. Fast food like burgers is becoming a thing of the past.

Julio said learning to cook is fun. And it’s important for healthy living.

“I liked the program,” he said. “It was helpful. I learned a lot.”

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