



**NORTH COUNTY FAITH ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
BACK TO SCHOOL:
FAITH COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTH &
SAFETY
(9-28-09)**

ATTENDEES

JuliAnna Arnett, Kay Stuckhardt, Sabrina Covington, Shell Cowpersmith, Lily Fife, Karen Perez, Juan Arjona, Randy Garcia, Melvin Thomas, Hector Morales, Daniel Perez, Kim Hinrichs, Kim Hodge, Jenel Lim, Amy Barras, Andrea De Lucia, Erica Salcuni, Marcela Vargas

GUESTS

Pastor Juan Arjona, Mision Vida Nueva

Daniel Perez, Community Outreach Director, Mision Vida Nueva & Community Activist

Jenel Lim, Community Health Promotion Specialist, County of SD Health & Human Services Agency

Amy Barras, Faith Relations Intern, San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative

INTRODUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

(JuliAnna Arnett)

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative (Initiative) is a public/private partnership whose mission is to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in San Diego County by creating healthy environments for all children and families through advocacy, education, policy development, and environmental change. Utilizing the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Action Plan, a comprehensive plan to end childhood obesity in SD County, as its guide; the Initiative engages stakeholders from the seven domain areas with the most influence on developing environments that support healthy choices and behavior change (i.e. County & City Government; Healthcare Systems & Providers; Schools & Before- / After-school Providers; Childcare & Preschool Providers; Community-based, Faith-based and Youth Organizations; Media and Marketing Industry and Businesses) to implement the Action Plan's strategies for childhood obesity prevention and reduction and work together to improve nutrition and physical activity opportunities for all kids.

Walk to School Programs: A Tool for Keeping Kids Healthy & Safe

- JuliAnna gave a brief overview of walk to school programs and the connection between violence/gang prevention and childhood obesity.

Importance of Faith Communities in Addressing Social Issues and Wellness

- Juan Arjona briefly talked about the importance of faith communities addressing childhood obesity, social issues and wellness.

Safe Walk Program

- Daniel Perez who has helped to organize the Safe Walk program for Escondido Union School District introduced Safe Walk to the group. Safe Walk is a partnership between the City of Escondido, the local school district, and his church. Volunteers that are recruited for the program work within a certain radius of a school to monitor activity in the streets. This has not only provided kids with a safe way to walk to school but has also thus far effectively reduced crime in those areas. He discussed the importance of Safe Walk reducing gang recruitment and crime in neighborhoods as well as allowing children to be physically active. Currently, 4 elementary schools in Escondido are involved in the program (Lincoln, Pioneer, Park and Rose Elementary School). **Daniel is working on securing the program at Mission Middle School.**
- Daniel discussed with the group the importance of other organizations and faith communities becoming involved in the program. Daniel would like to better the program and see it reach other communities in San Diego by involving more organizations and faith communities. **He is currently inviting groups to “adopt” a school or number of schools to facilitate the expanse of the program.**
- The group discussed liability issues and the process of training volunteers. Daniel said in previous trainings he has invited the police department to speak about gang prevention. Volunteers are educated to know what local gang activity looks like. The school administration has also been invited to the trainings for support. Parents and volunteers must sign a liability agreement, so volunteers are not held accountable for anything that may happen off school grounds.
- **Daniel stated that on October 20th he has a meeting with The City of Escondido Neighborhood Services department, the Escondido Union School District and local churches to discuss future Safe Walk programs.**

Walking School Bus Program

- Jenel Lim introduced the Walking School Bus program to the group. The Walking School Bus program operates by mapping out a safe route for children to walk with trained volunteers to school. She launched a program at Alamosa Park Elementary School and had children and parents assess how they felt about the idea of their kids walking to school through a survey that was sent home. The results showed that safety was the number one concern. Jenel also discussed the Walkability Checklist faith communities could use with families and children to assess their neighborhoods. The Walkability Checklist is available by logging onto <http://www.walktoschool.org/eventideas/checklists.cfm>
- Jenel informed the group that there are Safe Routes to School grants schools and cities can jointly apply for. These grants require community support.
- **Kay Stuckhardt suggested faith communities run a one- time Walking School Bus pilot program in fall 2009, maybe a one-time event at one school to get people excited and then choose another time to follow up during spring 2010.**

ICANSANDIEGO Resources for Faith Communities Toolkit

Amy Barras introduced the icansandiego Resources for Faith Communities Toolkit. **icansandiego** is a program operated through the San Diego Diabetes Coalition which educates the general public on healthy eating and physical activity options as strategies for diabetes prevention. The program promotes healthy eating and physical activity, so the Initiative has partnered with **icansandiego** to create this toolkit for faith communities. Resources include overviews on how a faith community can start wellness programs related to healthy eating and physical activity. The resources in the toolkit can be accessed by



logging onto www.icansandiego.org. Faith communities can join icansandiego as an individual or group to receive support to make healthy changes, establish short or long term goals and access the resources in the toolkit.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Hector Morales, Kim Hinrichs, Kim Hodge, Melvin Thomas, and Lily Fife are interested in starting a walking school bus program.
- Sister Mary Lou Carlson is talking to pastors at her church about starting a walk-to-school program.
- JuliAnna Arnett said that she will follow up with any interested parties and make any resources shared at the meeting available upon request. She passed around a walkability checklist at the end of the meeting and encouraged anyone that is interested in one of these programs to fill out the sheet and return it to her. The City of Escondido is currently updating it's General Plan, which determines the design and growth of a community (e.g. walkable, bikeable, etc.). The walkability information can be used to inform this process and create more walkable communities.