

# Hood River County Residents Dance Towards Better Health

## Summary

Collaboration helped Latino community members have access to physical activity. Providence Hood River Memorial Hospital, St. Francis House and Mid-Valley Elementary, Community Education, Hood River Middle School, local certified Zumba instructors, Parkdale Fire District, Oregon Child Development Coalition, community members and CHWs rallied together to break down existing barriers. Consequently, Hood River County Latino residents have better access to affordable physical activity opportunities. A community effort with long lasting effects.

## Challenge

Affordable/accessible physical activity is a barrier for Hood River County (HRC) Latino residents. According to a the US Census, 2010, 29% of HRC residents are Hispanic or Latino. According to OSU Extension's, A Portrait of Poverty in Oregon, "Hispanics earn about half the average state per capita income." Additionally, local Community Health Workers (CHWs) report 50% of Latinos who work in HRC do not have documents needed to be able to apply for unemployment benefits. Therefore, the low 6.8% unemployment rate is not widely accepted as reflecting the true unemployment rate in HRC. Both a lack of money and safety create barriers towards physical activity. As noted in a recent Racial Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) assessment conducted in Hood River, 71% (n=141) of respondents do not feel safe walking in streets where there are no street lights or sidewalks.

*"I decided to be a Zumba instructor to fill a need. Women that attend my class have given me different answers as to why they attend, the two main reasons are 1) to lose weight 2) to get out of the house, de-stress and not feel depressed."*

- Yesenia Castro

## Solution

Barriers quickly turned into solutions as community members and CHWs take initiative to make low- or no-cost Zumba a reality for people who cannot afford regular Zumba courses. Collaboration among Zumba instructors in our area is also a positive outcome as instructors are working with the community to offer an affordable option outside of their "regular" paying clientele. Additionally, instructors also volunteer their time leading Zumba at the Mercado del Valle in Odell. Finally, CHWs leading additional Zumba groups in their community has been a positive outcome as well. Now there are affordable physical activity options for community members in all of Hood River County.



## Success Stories

<http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccesstories/>

## Results

Because of CHW leadership and community members interest in change, there are around 50 youth and children attending the 2-day Zumba groups in Odell with over 200 women signed up and able to participate in Zumba. Families who otherwise would not have an opportunity to participate in exercise now have a place to become physically active. Additionally, the group asked for additional resources, and health education is now a component of the Odell Zumba groups. In Parkdale, a community 15 minutes south of Odell and farther away from services, there are 45 community members signed up for Zumba, and up to 25 people attend at a time. Like in Odell, community members ceased the opportunity to build community and become healthier together. Consequently, community members are also conducting a food and produce exchange each night they meet.

## Sustainable Success

Ensuring Zumba certification for CHWs to lead Zumba on a volunteer basis will have a lasting effect long after this project. Working to expand the model by training additional CHWs and providing them tools to address health inequities in their communities will increase the possibility sustainability. CHWs will help their communities address and solve their own problems. Free or low-cost Zumba is only the beginning of communities working together to become stronger. As seen in one of the Zumba groups, community members are coming together to ensure there is food security among their neighbors. By mid 2015 there is a plan to have up to 50 trained and certified CHWs in the Hood River area. This will help ensure communities voices are heard.

## Your Involvement is Key

You too can get involved and help ensure the lasting effects! Volunteering your time and/or skills can help breakdown barriers to quality affordable physical activity. Your neighbors, friends, family and community can only become stronger with your contributions. Whether supporting local policies to address the needs of the community, or volunteering your time to help lead exercise groups, you have the ability to make a difference! Find out how you can be a part of something special.



## Contact

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