

## **iPor Vida! Healthy Restaurant Initiative**

For years, San Antonio has been listed in the top 10 most obese cities. This distinction comes with a number of costs. Obesity and diabetes in our community has raised medical costs above the average for Texas and the US. Many of these costs for the indigent are paid for by county taxes. These health issues have also had a negative impact on businesses wanting to move their companies and employees here.

To address these health and community issues, County Commissioner Tommy Adkisson and TX State Senator Leticia Van de Putte formed the Diabetes Initiative work group. Together, they convened community leaders representing hospitals, schools, the health department (San Antonio Metropolitan Health District), epidemiologists, the San Antonio Food Bank, politicians, doctors, researchers, dentists, dietitians, food writers and athletes. Thanks to a Political Action Committee (PAC) donation from TDA to Senator Van de Putte, Linda Farr was appointed to the committee by the Senator to represent dietitians in the discussion and decision-making.

In December 2009 the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) received a “Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities” grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and in March 2010 received a “Communities Putting Prevention to Work” grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, both with a goal of implementing healthy eating and active living initiatives to prevent obesity. One of the initiatives supported under the grants is the iPor Vida! program, an effort to create healthy menu choices in restaurants.

The iPor Vida! program, was created under the leadership of Kathleen Shields (Chronic Disease Prevention Manager, Metro Health) and in full partnership with SADA and the San Antonio Restaurant Association (SARA). The goal of iPor Vida! is to increase the availability of healthy restaurant choices for our community, to decrease obesity and diabetes. Our SADA dietitians have donated countless hours of time attending meetings, analyzing recipes, and developing criteria for healthy children’s menu items, and adult entrees, side dishes and plates. SADA dietitians met with restaurateurs to gather data for analysis and make recommendations for recipe adjustments to meet established criteria. The iPor Vida! nutritional criteria can be found at

<http://www.sanantonio.gov/health/PorVida%20Nutritional%20Criteria.html>.

The press conference to launch the first healthy kids menu was on Thursday, August 27, 2009 at Pico de Gallo restaurant. Many thanks to the SADA dietitians who worked on the kids’ menu criteria and nutrition analysis: Jessica Garcia, Alexa George, Angela Gil, Dion Turner, Rayna Wooten, and Norma Zuniga.

The press conference to launch the iPor Vida! program was on Wednesday, October 13, 2010 at the Pearl Stable in the Pearl Brewery. Mayor Julian Castro, Senator Van de Putte, Judge Nelson Wolffe, restaurateurs representing the seven original participating restaurants (McDonald’s, Jim’s, Pico de Gallo, Rosemary Delivers, Delicious Tamales, Fish City Grill, and Carino’s Italian), dietitians and media were present. SADA president Rayna Wooten spoke on behalf of SADA and recognized the efforts of SADA

RDs. Overall, the press event provided great media attention for SADA and Registered Dietitians. Many thanks to the SADA dietitians who worked on the ¡Por Vida! program: Alexa George, Norma Zuniga, Dion Turner, Elda Balle, Linda Farr, Rayna Wooten and the new Metro Health Dietitian Caroline Roffidal-Blanco. After ¡Por Vida! launched, the First Lady recognized the initiative at a media event for her “Let’s Move” campaign.

In May 2010, San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro established the first Mayor’s Fitness Council for San Antonio. The Mayor’s Fitness Council has embraced the ¡Por Vida! program and has pledged to support it moving forward. The Mayor’s Fitness Council includes health professionals, including two RDs—Claudia Zapata-Elliott and Linda Farr, chefs, school administrators, business executives and fitness experts. The mission of the council is to transform San Antonio into a healthier and more active community in which citizens, schools, businesses, community groups, and other organizations achieve targeted health and fitness goals through the following initiatives:

- 1) Media and Community Outreach—Mayor’s Fitness Challenge and a Health Website—  
“SABALANCE.org”
- 2) Physical Fitness and Active Transportation—Fitness in the Park, bike trails and bike share, Ciclovía
- 3) Healthy Schools—Healthy Schools summits—coordinated by 2 RDs, Mandy Tyler and Caroline Roffidal-Blanco
- 4) Nutrition and Fresh Food—Farmer’s Market and Health Cooking Initiatives, Community/School gardens
- 5) Corporate Wellness—corporate wellness

Look for the full rollout of the “SABALANCE.org” website in early 2011. The website will contain articles on healthy eating and weight loss, links to nutrition and fitness resources and events, a calendar of health and fitness events, healthy school associations and resources, inspirational stories, and links to self-assessment tools.

This has been a very important and exciting collaboration between RDs and community leaders to improve the health of the public.