



City of Arts & Innovation

# News Release

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## **City of Riverside Celebrates Latino Health Awareness Month**

*Activities help families learn about sugar's effect on obesity and how to make healthier choices*

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside is celebrating Latino Health Awareness Month in September and recently joined with community members and the County of Riverside to bring attention to the negative role that sugar plays in obesity.

Promoted by the California Champions for Change campaign, Latino Health Awareness Month is an opportunity to promote health as part of the community's rich cultural heritage and traditions. A recent event at the Cesar Chavez Community Center featured activities to encourage Latino families to join the movement for healthy change by eating healthier and being more active every day.

"Latinos can be proud that our cultural heritage embraces healthy food and physical activity," said one participant, Francisca Beltran, a Riverside resident who has made healthy changes in her own home.

"We have a rich tradition of dishes filled with fruits and vegetables and, of course, Latin dances that are good for the heart and soul."

Beltran now facilitates community physical activity classes as a Champion Mom.

"The movement for healthy change doesn't mean turning away from our heritage; in fact we can honor our roots by living healthier and more active lives," Beltran said.

The Eastside HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) Zone, a Kaiser Permanente-funded initiative that works to combat obesity by making healthy choices accessible to Eastside residents, partnered to host the event. Eastside HEAL Zone works to empower residents to lead healthier lives through environmental changes that are sustained by policies and enhanced by education and promotion.

The Champions for Change event also featured a presentation from Dr. Keyla Monterey, who explained chronic disease trends among Latinos. Attendees participated in a theatre presentation and panel discussion that highlighted common challenges and successes for Latino households. Children's activities at the event included active games and a healthy recipe demonstration and taste testing.

Latino Health Awareness Month activities this year are focusing on the impact that sugar-sweetened beverages are having in the Latino community. Such beverages, including sodas and energy drinks, are the largest source of added sugar for most people and are associated with increased rates of obesity and other health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes.

“In Riverside, the Champions For Change initiative has promoted healthy beverages through the ‘Rethink Your Drink’ campaign activities at community events – reaching more than 15,000 City residents so far this year,” Riverside Mayor Rusty Bailey said.

Nationwide, Latinos are disproportionately affected by diabetes. More than 13 percent of Latino adults are affected by the disease, whereas diabetes affects less than 8 percent of Caucasian adults. In California, Latino adolescents are more likely than other teens to drink sugar-sweetened beverages, with 48 percent drinking at least one per day.

The Latino Health Awareness Event was one of several statewide Latino Health Awareness Month celebrations held throughout California in September. For more information, tips and recipes, visit [www.CAChampionsForChange.net](http://www.CAChampionsForChange.net).



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit [www.CaChampionsForChange.net](http://www.CaChampionsForChange.net).