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## ***Salud America!* Gets \$1.3M to Develop Culturally Tailored Content to Fuel Healthy Changes that Reduce Latino Childhood Obesity**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (Feb. 1, 2016)—*Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children* has received a one-year, \$1.3 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to develop new, culturally tailored educational content that empowers people to work toward policy changes that support the health of Latino children.

*Salud America!*, which was established in 2007, has recruited a national online network of 50,000 parents, school personnel, health professionals, and community leaders who support its mission: “End Latino childhood obesity by communicating good health and driving people to start and assist healthy changes in their schools and communities.”

The new funding will allow *Salud America!* to expand its network and engage members with enhanced educational content—including multimedia role model stories, social media events, online resources, digital action campaigns, and marketing—geared toward healthy change.

“We are excited by RWJF’s support, which will help us continue to push the boundaries of communication to empower Latinos to develop healthy changes in their schools and communities,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, director of *Salud America!*, headquartered at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

More than 38 percent of Latino children ages 2-19 are overweight or obese, compared to 28.5 percent of White youth and 35.2 percent of Black youth. Latino children also face barriers in access to healthy foods and drinks and physical activity, especially among those ages 0-5.

*Salud America!* was established to address these challenges.

In its first few years, the program developed the first-ever coordinated agenda for research on Latino childhood obesity, funded 20 research grantees who identified promising obesity-prevention strategies, and created an award-winning website and multimedia content that have been recognized by the AVA Digital Awards, Communicator Awards, Telly Awards, Aurora Awards, Digital Health Awards, HERMES Awards, Davey Awards, and W<sup>3</sup> Awards.

With the new funding, effective Feb. 1, 2016, to Jan. 31, 2017, *Salud America!* will:

**Expand its website.** Launched in 2014, the [Salud America! website](#) maps the latest healthy changes, resources, and stories and videos of role models who’ve created change in cities, schools, states and the nation. The program posted new research on different aspects of Latino childhood obesity ([Better Food in the Neighborhood](#), [Active Spaces](#), [Healthier Schools](#), [Healthy Weight by Kindergarten](#), Sugary Drinks to post February 2016). The website also allows people to join a map of the movement, connect with each other, and get free customized data that can help fuel local healthy change. The website will expand to include crowdsourced data and other tools.

**Develop new action campaigns.** *Salud America!* will create new campaigns to encourage its network to take action and share information. Campaigns include video voting contests, member recognition awards, and “how to” topics, such as how to start a shared use agreement with your local school so it can share its recreational facilities with the public after hours.

**Expand communications.** *Salud America!* will enhance engagement with its network in a variety of ways, including e-communication, social media posts (via [@SaludToday](#)), and social media events, such as the [#SaludTues tweetchats](#), which reach a weekly average of 9.9 million Twitter users. These offerings will expand to include webinars, podcasts, and livestreams.

The program also will evaluate how effective its communications work is on motivating grassroots policy and environmental change.

“We believe our content connects with and empowers Latinos to get involved in change and building a culture of health where everyone can live healthy lives,” Ramirez said.

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***Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children***

*Salud America!* is a nonprofit network launched in 2007 that develops multimedia communications to educate and motivate its national online network—more than 50,000 kids, parents, teachers, academics, healthcare providers, and community leaders—to take action to reduce Latino childhood obesity and build a culture of health. The network was created and funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and is directed by Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, a health disparities researcher and director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. Visit *Salud America!* at <http://www.communitycommons.org/groups/salud-america/>. Follow *Salud America!* on social media via its [@SaludToday](#) handle on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [WordPress](#).

**About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)**

For more than 40 years the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has worked to improve health and health care. We are striving to build a national Culture of Health that will enable all to live longer, healthier lives now and for generations to come. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on [Twitter](#) or on [Facebook](#).