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Nutrition Needs Moms



The classroom, with its drawings and pictures on the walls, was crowded with *las mamás*, the moms, waiting to hear a Spanish presentation on nutrition and cooking. For some it was the first time attending this lecture series at the Cohasset Elementary school. For others it was their second time. One thing was certain; the word was out in this modest Latino community that the school was offering nutrition classes to help parents learn about eating healthy. This project, funded by a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and coordinated through CSUN's Marilyn Magaram Center, is a pilot program aimed at promoting nutritious eating habits in elementary schools and what better way to address the issue than to go to the source, *las mamás*! On this cold and rainy day all these *mamás* came to sit in their children's classrooms to learn about portion sizes, the food pyramid and the Farmer's Market.

To help them have a better understanding about healthy alternatives, Laura Gonzales, from the SEE-LA's Farm-to-Table program coordinated by Northridge Hospital Medical Center, brought unusual produce like orange beets, explaining that the leaves, lightly sautéed with olive oil were not only eatable but tasted amazing. The audience was silent when someone jokingly said, "I think I have that growing in my backyard." A roar of laughter erupted from the audience in an atmosphere charged with anticipation and excitement. It was easy to see that there was a sense of camaraderie among these ladies because they all shared in a common goal: to make a better life for their children. They were eager to learn about nutrition and good eating habits. Many sat tentatively reviewing the handouts given to them by Dr. Terri Lisagor, faculty of the Family Consumer Science Department, and her group of Peer Nutritional Counselors.



These *mamás*, now empowered with a nutritional understanding of the benefits of balance, variety and moderation (not to mention exercise), understood the benefits of having their children participate not only in choosing their vegetables at the market, but also in helping prepare them. Maybe these small changes could give them that little advantage they seek to help improve their children's lives.

