



NEWS RELEASE

Social & Health Research Center and Quest Diagnostics Team Up to Address Childhood Hunger and Obesity Exacerbated by COVID-19 in Underserved Communities

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Collaboration utilizes digital content to educate children and inspire healthy outcomes

SAN ANTONIO and SECAUCUS, N.J., May 24, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Childhood obesity has disproportionately affected Hispanic and Black communities as a result of negative social determinants of health for years. In the wake of COVID-19, low-income and racial/ethnic minority families, particularly Hispanic and African American, are struggling with an even greater risk of health complications such as obesity, diabetes, respiratory ailments and other predisposing conditions, according to a **report** by the Centers for Disease Control.

To help address the health inequity crisis, the Social and Health Research Center (SAHRC) of San Antonio, Texas has developed the **Bienestar/Neema Coordinated School Health Program**, an evidenced-based program using an innovative digitized curriculum designed to engage children and increase accessibility. The program has been recognized by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institutes for Health (NIH).

The program is led by Dr. Roberto Treviño, M.D., a physician and noted author who founded the SAHRC in 1995 to design and evaluate early age obesity and type 2 diabetes school health prevention programs. Dr. Treviño is the principal investigator of the two largest trials funded by the National Institutes of Health to prevent obesity and diabetes in children.

"We worked with young animation creators, ages 16 to 24, in four countries and the US who brought their diverse perspectives helping us create a digital interactive platform, that is engaging for the diverse populations that we are reaching," said Dr. Treviño. "We have already begun to see the impact of this curriculum, as young children are

taking what they learn back to their families, encouraging them to make healthy choices as well. Using animation will make this program even more compelling."

SAHRC has partnered with South Texas public schools in deploying healthcare and physical education curriculum and workbooks to positively influence children and their families' health behaviors to control and prevent obesity and related chronic diseases.

"As one of the fastest growing cities in the United States, San Antonio is committed to addressing the health needs of all of its citizens and our future generations," said San Antonio Mayor Ron Nirenberg. "We are eager to help our children develop healthy habits by moving this effort forward with SAHRC and Quest Diagnostics. I want San Antonio to serve as a healthy lifestyle model to expand this innovative and interactive animated platform across the country."

Quest Diagnostics [NYSE: DGX], the world's leading provider of testing and diagnostic insights, is collaborating with SAHRC to bring the curriculum to schools and communities where it is most needed, first in Texas and then across the United States. Quest Diagnostics and the Quest Diagnostics Foundation are supporting this effort as part of **Quest for Health Equity** (Q4HE), an initiative focused on providing resources, funding, testing services and education to address health disparities in underserved communities across the U.S.

"Enhancing the health and well-being of underserved communities was a critical need before the pandemic, and is even more so today," said Steve Rusckowski, Chairman, CEO and President of Quest Diagnostics. "We know childhood obesity is dramatically growing in underserved communities and that these resources are needed throughout the United States. Our goal is to support the digital evolution of this powerful curriculum to make it more appealing to today's youth and more affordable for key school districts' adoption across the country."

Recently, SAHRC engaged Americas Council for the Creative Economy (ACCE), a social purpose driven nonprofit company, to work with youth creators, to convert its entire curriculum for children from a textbook into a digital interactive animation platform, making it more economical for school districts and more compelling and engaging for students. The platform utilizes age-appropriate full motion 3-D animated characters, animated sing-alongs and tutorials, and the gamification of quizzes and tests to engage, inform and entertain students.

"We assembled a team of over 45 former students in Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, Jamaica and the U.S. to convert SAHRC's curriculum, which for them has been a labor of love," said Mark Marion, ACCE's Founder & Commercial Director.

Through digitization of its content, the price for schools dropped from \$18,000 for the printed version to under \$1,000 for the digitized version.

"The dramatic decrease in the cost of the curriculum makes it accessible for school districts serving low-income communities," said Superintendent Pedro Martinez of the San Antonio, Texas Independent School District. "This puts the resource within reach so our students can improve their health and quality of life."

The Bienestar/Neema curriculum will initially target more than 180,000 children and their families in Texas and New Jersey. From these states, plans include reaching close to a million students in 10 school districts in four other states in the U.S.

About the Social and Health Research Center, Inc

The Social and Health Research Center (SAHRC) was founded and established by Dr. Roberto Treviño, a physician, in 1991. SAHRC was incorporated as a non-profit organization with 501 (c) (3) status in 1995. The center is committed to the social and health well-being of populations most at-risk. The goals of SAHRC are to detect and reduce obesity and its associated chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. The objective is to develop and implement Research-Tested health programs to prevent and manage obesity and associated chronic diseases; and design evaluation tools to assess program effectiveness. www.SAHRC.org.

About Americas Council For The Creative Economy (ACCE)

ACCE is a social purpose driven non-profit established in 2014 that targets youth from disadvantaged communities, trains them in digital content creation and connects them to commercial production opportunities. ACCE has trained over 2000 students throughout the Americas.

About Quest Diagnostics

[Quest Diagnostics](http://www.questdiagnostics.com) empowers people to take action to improve health outcomes. Derived from the world's largest database of clinical lab results, Quest's diagnostic insights reveal new avenues to identify and treat disease, inspire healthy behaviors and improve health care management. Quest Diagnostics annually serves one in three adult Americans and half the physicians and hospitals in the United States, and our nearly 50,000 employees understand that, in the right hands and with the right context, our diagnostic insights can inspire actions that transform lives. www.QuestDiagnostics.com.

About Quest for Health Equity

Quest for Health Equity is an initiative of Quest Diagnostics and the Quest Diagnostics Foundation), focused on providing resources, funding, testing services and education to address health disparities in underserved communities across the U.S.

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