

# Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County



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## Meet our Board Secretary: Gerardo Ramirez

Gerardo is a well known leader and a humanitarian in the Hispanic/Latino Community. He says that his successful integration into the American culture comes from the love and support of his family and his passion for the Mexican culture. "The same flame I have for the Mexican culture is the one that has made me embrace the American culture". "Being involved with Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County is a great opportunity to help the community". "To be on the Board is a great honor for me. I work and learn from other experienced professionals to ensure that the funding and resources allocated to this great organization are used to give the very best services to mothers and infants in Manatee County".



Gerardo Ramirez, Board Secretary

Gerardo is a native of Mexico. He graduated from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico with a degree in Sciences and Humanities. Later on he joined the Air Force and graduated as Aviation Pilot where he worked for seven years before joining the Bank of Mexico. Gerardo has lived in Bradenton for 15 years. He is an Accredited Interpreter and owner of INTRAESPA. He is the official

contractor for the State of Florida, 12<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, Manatee County Courthouse, for interpretation services. He is also a certified massage therapist, a domestic violence counselor, a drug and alcohol counselor and he also holds a private pilot license for the State of Florida.

Gerardo wishes that the great services being provided by Healthy Start

can be expanded to continue to improve the lives of the mothers and infants in this county through prevention, education and support in particular to high risk and minority groups.

Gerardo's philosophy in life comes from two sources: the first one, his parents who instilled in him early on the value of service to others; the second one, his own desire to be a better person able to establish meaningful and authentic relationships with other human beings. "If I continue on this path, I am certain that I would allow my Higher Being to guide me through life."

## Children's Summit Planning Moving Along

The 2006 Children's Summit will take place on August 12, 2006 at the Manatee Civic Center and preparations are underway. The Latino Media, who got very active and involved last year, met again with the chairperson of this incredible event, Judy Bellamy, from Manatee County Government to discuss their support and participation for this year. Healthy Start is a long supporter of the Children's Summit and a member of the Planning Committee and will continue to serve as the contact with the Latino Media to ensure that the participation of the Latino families continues to grow.

Please mark August 12th on your calendars!





## PROJECT: Looking for Esperanza

By: Dr. Adriana Paramo

Agricultural work demands speedy hands, sharp eyes, flexible bodies, and sturdy legs. It makes no distinction between men and women and doesn't discriminate against the weak, the sick, or the pregnant. If visitors ventured out into the country, they would see women, sometimes pregnant, hauling up to 90 pound-buckets of produce on their shoulders. Soon, these visitors would find out that the citrus business that brings in over 1 billion dollars in revenue pays its pickers 75 cents per box of 90 pounds. If Americans went to the fields and looked past the palm-lined avenues, they'd see the overcrowded, run-down trailers rented to farmworkers for up to \$1000/month and they would wonder if they were still in the same buoyant Sunshine State. If tourists explored Florida beyond Disney World and off the interstate, they'd find the tomato groves that bring in 500 million dollars in revenue where the pickers are paid the same rate they were paid three decades ago: a penny a pound.

And if any of us—non farmworkers—decided to study and document the lives of immigrant farmworkers we would find a very grim picture if the fruit picker or vegetable harvester is a woman. A healthy woman is capable of picking only a percentage of what a man does. Therefore, she receives a daily average of only \$30 a day for the same number of hours. Not only do they receive lower salaries: It takes three farmworker women to earn the same amount of money earned by two farmworker men; they also become easy victims of forced prostitution, sexual harassment, rape,



Dr. Adriana Paramo

domestic violence, and slavery—all of this while fulfilling their responsibilities as mothers and wives. Besides, women farmworkers face many other problems that never beset their male counterparts. They have breasts and uteri that go without appropriate preventive care for years at a time; they develop breast and cervical cancers that go undetected until it's too late; they go through pregnancies without medical checkups; they have inexplicable miscarriages and stillbirths, and they bring to life deformed babies after having been exposed to a medley of pesticides such as methyl bromide, paraquat, difocol, and phosdrin, most of which are banned in other industries. No wonder farm work is considered to be one of the five most dangerous occupations in the nation.

Mexicans, Haitians, and Guatemalans are the mainstays in the Florida fields today. They lack skills, are mostly illiterate, rarely know whom they work for, live and work in modern-slavery conditions, and are not adequately protected by federal laws. And while

both men and women shrink from denouncing abuses for fear of retaliation, of losing their jobs, or of being deported, women constantly struggle with two very private issues: the fear of being sexually assaulted by co-workers and supervisors, and the fear of being physically abused at home by their own partners. The rate of domestic violence against farmworker women is criminally high. And because it is considered a taboo subject among Hispanic families, it is undisclosed, un denounced, and unpunished.

Looking for Esperanza is more than a simple journey in the search for an undocumented woman. It is a journey into the underbelly of Florida, an underworld of "have-nots" determined to succeed within a society that despises them. Looking for Esperanza is about women. It is about those daughters, wives, lovers, and mothers who daily navigate and pray their way through a complex system set up so they won't grow roots in this soil. Yet some of them do. And miraculously some of them even prosper.

*Dr. Paramo was our guest speaker at our educational meeting in March. She is a researcher, writer and an international presenter. She holds a PhD in Anthropology and a Petroleum Engineering Degree. She has done intensive research in the United States, India and Pakistan on women working in the agriculture business. She is presently finishing her book "Looking for Esperanza" based on her research of women working in the Florida fields.*



## Prenatal Massage for Healthy Start Moms

Paula Termini, RN , LMT with Transitions Massage presented at our April General Membership Meeting on the benefits of prenatal and infant massage. She gave a live demonstration on a mom who is a current client of Healthy Start. Paula also reported to the community at large that she is still taking referrals so that pregnant women can access her services. Paula is funded by a grant from the Massage Therapy Association. Self referrals and community agencies are accepted. The only requirement is that moms are Healthy Start clients.

Paula highlighted the many advantages of prenatal massage and infant massage, the impact on women's pregnancy and the delivery of the baby.

The live demonstration created a sense of peacefulness, particularly when seeing the mom so rested, relaxed and comfortable during the session.

For referrals and more information, please contact Paula Termini at: (941) 730-0203



## Diabetes Education Program

Healthy Start Community Health Workers are now delivering education and information to their peers on diabetes. They went to a training at Manatee County Health Department under their Closing the Gap Program. The training included very important aspects to understanding diabetes, how to prevent it and how to deal with it. For this purpose, Mary Ellen Sagatys and Ansley Mora planned a day full of interesting topics with wonderful speakers such as Dr. Marcela Jones who explained at length the causes of diabetes, possible treatment, side effects and most

importantly how to prevent it. Daniel Stewart from the WIC program delivered the information regarding nutrition and Jennifer Ricci from the Closing the Gap with Manatee County Rural Health Services, as well as Ansley Mora from GSAHEC, equipped the Community Health Workers with tools that they can use to deliver this information to families in the community.

Manatee County Health Department is announcing a kick off diabetes party on April 20th at 4:00 PM.



## Thank You!

A big Thank You goes to the ladies of Loving Stitches Ministry of Our Lady of the Angels Catholic Community for their loving and generous contributions. This is a group of ladies who have been steadily making shawls, receiving blankets, quilts and baby clothes that are distributed for the moms and babies we serve.

On behalf of all the moms and babies that you help us keep warm and happy, Thank You for your time and loving commitment and most of all for caring about those who need the most.





## After School and Computer Program

Healthy Start Manatee, in partnership with Project Light, began to offer in September 2005 a computer class for our adult clients interested in learning computer skills and also learning English using an interactive software to complement their regular English classes. We also began offering an after school program for elementary school children while their parents are learning English or attending computer classes. Both programs are a reality thanks to the generous support of the Foundation for the Migrant of the Diocese of Venice.

Project Light and Healthy Start Manatee have a long standing partnership with a common goal: to improve the quality of life of the families who are new in the county and working hard to learn the English language so that they can have better job opportunities and are capable of using their own voices. Both agencies are providing two mornings a week a program for the pre school children attending the Literacy Center with their parents as we noticed that the children lack the very basic skills they need to enter into the school system.

We were recently delighted to have a visit from Ms. Bridget Olson, a Board Member for the Foundation who came to see the set up of the program and tour the facilities.

For referrals, please contact our Program Director, Luz Corcuera at: 708-6111 Ext. 105 or [luz\\_corcuera@healthystartmanatee.org](mailto:luz_corcuera@healthystartmanatee.org)



## A Visit From Laura Pan, Our Contract Manager

Laura Pan, is a Government Operations Consultant II with the Florida Department of Health. She is a Contract Manager for the Healthy Start Coalitions; the Family Health Line (which is the State's 1-800 number to help link women to prenatal care and infants to health care); a Closing the Gap contract and a Fetal and Infant Mortality Review contract. All of these contracts intersect around Healthy Start, which is her major function.

Laura has been in this position since the inception of Healthy Start in 1992 (when they were called HRS) and facilitated the rule being written, as well as writing the first RFP for Healthy Start Coalitions to become officially recognized as Healthy Start Coalitions. She says that she has been fortunate to see 32 Coalitions formed in local communities.



She has visited Healthy Start Manatee for about 8 years straight but she says that this last visit was the best since she was able to spend time out in the field, which is much more exciting than being at a desk. Laura says, "The visits that let me see and interact with the community regenerates me and makes me remember what Healthy Start is all about. It helps to renew what the mission is - Moms and Babies." When we asked her if she had any additional comments for the newsletter she responded: "Your Coalition is highly regarded by the Department and you mirror the image and vision that Gov. Chiles has always had for moms and babies. Keep up the good work! "



## Celebrating Community Health Workers

February 25th was a day of learning, networking and pampering for the great souls who help hard-to-reach populations in our communities. Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center, held its 2nd Annual Community Health Worker Conference and had a wonderful turnout. GSAHEC sponsored this conference to recognize Community Health Workers (CHWs) who work hard to educate other members of their community on diverse health matters. These dedicated CHWs provide countless hours of support and connect those in need to health and human services in DeSoto, Manatee and Sarasota Counties.

The conference was planned with the help of key community partners such as Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee County and Sarasota Memorial Hospital's Newtown Wellness Program. The goal was met: to provide a forum for CHWs to network, learn, sharpen

skills, and celebrate their hard work. CHWs are "lay" people that are trained to teach members of their communities, who often times lack access to care, to learn about and act upon important health issues.

Ansley Mora, Community Education Coordinator for GSAHEC, the brain and energy behind this project said that she was very impressed with the Community Health Workers participation in the teaching tools workshops offered this year and very pleased to see the Healthy Start Team sharing their expertise with their peers at this conference. Martha Ramirez, Marisol Diaz, Lourdes Loarte, Eva Valencia, Yolanda Rios, Sandra Cruz and Ana Robledo are very proud to continue delivering prenatal education, breastfeeding education, SIDS prevention, breast cancer awareness, folic acid and diabetes education to families in our community.



## Health Literacy

Edna Apostol, Executive Director of Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center provided a lively and informative presentation on Health Literacy at our January General Membership Meeting.

Edna highlighted the difficulties understanding many of the medical terminologies being used when providing information to clients and its effects in people with low literacy levels. These difficulties are evident when reading signs and locating places, reading informational materials and questionnaires. Clients can be intimidated of completing, keeping records, measuring and counting, asking and answering questions.

Edna invited the providers attending this presentation to be aware of this problem and help their agencies to promote client friendly materials and forms, promoting the use of simple and direct language, using lay terms, covering only 2 or 3 concepts at a time and underlining key points.



For any agencies interested in this presentation please contact Edna Apostol at : 361-6602



## Eleven Years with Healthy Start Manatee



Nancy Pettit, our Office Manager started at Healthy Start in September 1995 and quickly realized how important the services were to pregnant women and new mothers. She is married to Louis and they have two daughters: Laura and Patty and six grandchildren. Nancy says that she has especially enjoyed working with the many agencies and individuals in the community that have embraced Healthy Start and feels honored that so many volunteers have given countless hours to the Coalition. Over the years, Nancy has attended the Board of Directors' meetings and appreciates the many community leaders who have given their time to serve and provide their expertise.

Nancy provides the "behind the scenes" work, submitting diligently reports, preparing the statements and keeping up with the administrative work. She wears several hats too on daily basis. She gets very excited when listening to the Community Health Workers as they come into the office and share their stories on clients, programs, and services. She is also delighted when dedicated volunteers such as Pat Royer, Jackie Kelsey, Barbara and Lorraine from the Pilot Club, a member of the DEM women group or just anyone wanting to support our programs calls or stops by the office with their generous contributions bringing a smile to our faces.

Nancy's dream for Manatee County is to see a reduction in the number of low birthweight babies, an increase in first trimester entry to prenatal care, and reductions in the numbers of fetal and infant deaths. Nancy says: "I believe so strongly in Healthy Start services and I, like all our staff and volunteers, would love to see every high-risk-pregnancy woman participate in our programs."

## Rural Women Health Project and Healthy Start Manatee



The Rural Women Health Project has been in existence in Gainesville since 1992. Their goal is to involve rural communities in the creation of innovative, informative and educational materials to be used by Community Health Workers to promote the

health and well-being of families. They give special attention to Latino immigrant families and use popular mediums such as the fotonovelas, (a traditional reading format in Latin American countries utilizing dialogue boxes and photos) as well as radionovelas. They have produced great material on breast cancer, tuberculosis, HIV prevention, sexuality, sexual violence prevention, and teen pregnancy (among other topics) all within the cultural realities of Spanish-speaking communities.

Robin Lewy and Fran Ricardo were recently visiting Healthy Start Manatee and working with the Community Health Workers for the kick-off of two RHWP projects, "Vivir a todo pulmón", a tuberculosis education project for Spanish-speaking families and "Creando Nuestra Salud", an early breast cancer detection project for Latino women. They provided an overview on both projects and initiated a series of surveys that were carried out by the Healthy Start Community Health Workers in Manatee County. They did a phenomenal job of completing over 80 surveys on breast cancer and 80 surveys on tuberculosis. These surveys are being analyzed and will serve as the basis for the development of materials to serve Latino families.

Robin and Fran have plans to come back with future training and to continue working with Healthy Start to better serve the needs of the community.

**NEW PROGRAM**

Manatee  
Healthy Start

**"En Familia"**

Education and Support Program  
For the Prevention of Child Abuse, Neglect and  
Abandonment

Funded by Sarasota Sports Foundation

