

Diabetes Education in the Latino Community

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The need for diabetes education among the Latino population was identified by Father Schoeppe from St. Henry's Catholic Church. He knew several parishioners who were experiencing the complications of diabetes including amputations, heart disease, and general poor health. A team of four professionals in the community worked with the Catholic Church to organize a Step up to the Plate course in Spanish.



In order to meet the needs of the Latino population Father Schoeppe invited six men and women from the parish to meet with us and help us plan the class. This group discussed the format of the class, meeting days, times, and locations, how to publicize the class, and whether measuring height, weight, waist and hip circumference, blood pressure and hemoglobin A1c would be accepted.

At the recommendation of this group we held a one hour class about diabetes after the Spanish Mass on Saturday evening to see if people were interested in learning more. The secretary at the church advertised the class in the church bulletin and encouraged people to stay after Mass. Father Schoeppe also announced the class during church services.

A local Spanish-speaking physician presented the information. About twenty men and women participated. When the presentation was completed the participants agreed that they would like to learn more.

After receiving a grant to fund the translation of materials, and a Spanish-speaking dietician to teach the class, a seven session *Step up to the Plate* class was presented. Elsa, the secretary from the church, continued to work with us. The church provided the facilities for the class. Elsa personally contacted those who were interested in the class and prepared announcements for the church bulletin. She also helped translate a flyer that other committee members delivered to the Migrant Health Clinic, La Tienda, a local Mexican store, the Migrant Head Start program, the LDS Spanish branch and the Victory Assembly of God Church.

The Step up to the Plate class was offered in the fall of 2004. Eleven men and women attended one or more classes and six women completed the pre- and post-class screening. The professional team members attended each class and got acquainted with participants. Elsa also attended each class and called participants to remind them about the classes and sometimes provided rides for participants.

When first asked by Father Schoeppe to provide diabetes education to the Latino population I was nervous. I am not a diabetes educator or a dietician and the attempts I had made to reach out to the Latino population in the past had not been successful. Organizing the team of professionals which included dieticians, nurses, and diabetes educators helped me feel more confident about providing the information needed. Following the guidance of Linda Skogrand about working with a cultural guide helped reduce my fears of offending or alienating those we were trying to reach.

I also had the feeling that succeeding in providing this educational opportunity would prove to Father Schoeppe that USU Extension could be a trusted partner in reaching out to the Latino population in the future through the Catholic Church.

One of the key factors that made this program successful was having Elsa work with us and guide us. She served as our “cultural guide.” She provided an essential link to the Latino population and helped us reach the population.

My advice to others who would like to implement a program such as this is to find someone from the community that you are trying to reach to work with you. Develop a friendship with them. Listen to what they have to say. In your work together always follow through in completing the things you agreed to do.