



Sembrando Salud Empowers Farmworkers and Their Families to Make Educated Choices that Lead to Improved Health and Happiness

Reiter Affiliated Companies Pioneers Farmworker Wellness Program

OXNARD, Calif. – In a concerted effort to help agriculture workers and their families live healthier and happier lives while curtailing obesity and diabetes, Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC), the largest fresh multi-berry producer in the world, established a comprehensive wellness program for the farmworker population called Sembrando Salud.

Key to the launch of Sembrando Salud was a partnership in the U.S. with UC Berkeley Health Initiative of the Americas, UC Davis Center for Occupational and Environmental Health, UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety, and in Mexico, with Fundación Mexicana Para el Desarrollo Rural, A.C.

“The farmworker community is disproportionately impacted by diabetes, and we believe it is important to help create awareness about the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity,” said Yissel Barajas, chief human resources officer for RAC and one of the architects of the Sembrando Salud program. “When we are aware of the health impact of our diet and fitness choices, we take steps to lead a more fulfilling and positive life as well as inspire our friends and family to make healthier choices.”

Sembrando Salud, established in 2009, is a culturally proficient 10-week course called “Pasos Saludables.” Farmworkers participate in health literacy based on a simple five-step healthy framework, which promotes drinking more water, eating more fresh vegetables and fruits, exercising at least 30 minutes a day, measuring food portions as well as the waist line and involving families and friends in practicing healthy habits. The information is presented in Spanish in a humorous and friendly storytelling approach.

“Five years ago, I participated in the Pasos Saludables program when they went to the ranch to invite us to their classes on how to take care of our health, how to prevent chronic diseases, high blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes, and there I learned how important it is to eat healthy and prevent diseases that affect us our health every day,” said Lidia Lopez Sierra a Sembrando Salud graduate. “I made a change in 2011 in my habits for myself and my family. Before the program, I weighed 175 pounds and now I weigh 135 pounds and I am grateful for the program because it helps us to improve our well-being.”

As of 2016, more than 5,000 farmworkers have graduated from the program across ranches in the U.S. and Mexico. Based on program data from 2009 to 2016, health risks associated with obesity, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity among Sembrando Salud graduates have been significantly reduced while increasing employee engagement levels. According to the Sembrando Salud 2016 Annual Report, the program reached new levels of engagement within the company’s network of ranches. In 2016, there were 945 employees enrolled in Sembrando Salud across California. Of those, 752 employees graduated from the program – a 10 percent increase in the overall graduation rate from 2015. Key baseline metrics showed that 75 percent of all participants exceeded healthy Body Mass Index (BMI) levels, but by graduation, a strong majority had lowered their BMI to healthier levels.

REITER

AFFILIATED  COMPANIES

“To see the vision of the program come alive and positively impact farmworkers is uplifting for Sembrando Salud team members on the ground, who witness the shift in the way participants choose foods and beverages,” said Priscila Cisneros, the Sembrando Salud Program Manager, “halfway through the sessions, we see less sugary beverages, more vegetables and more engaged participants. RAC’s goal is for other agriculture companies to embrace the Sembrando Salud model and offer wellness programs for their employees to reach greater positive impact in the health of the farmworkers and their families.”

To learn more about RAC’s Sembrando Salud Program, please Priscila Cisneros at Priscila.Cisneros@berry.net.