



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
MEL & ENID ZUCKERMAN COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

# Zuckerman Family Center for Prevention and Health Promotion

## 2023 IMPACT REPORT

# IMPACT

The University of Arizona Zuckerman Family Center for Prevention & Health Promotion (ZFCPHP) at the Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health continues to inspire community engagement by educating, training and supporting the needs of the people of Southern Arizona. Our programs and staff are dedicated to creating sustainable, educational and interactive programs to assist in sharing public health knowledge with the most vulnerable in our community. The 2023 annual report provides an overview of our programs and initiatives and how they have positively impacted our community, our college, our staff, and our students.

# IMPORTANCE

The ZFCPHP efforts had another impactful and meaningful year educating and working with Tucson's most under-represented populations. Our programs provide children and families in our community a unique opportunity to advance their knowledge of healthy behaviors and experience first-hand the role of positive lifestyle options to improve their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Additionally, our Center mentors and trains over 100 MEZCOPH students annually with service-based learning and community engagement in wellness and health promotion, and to share resources with those we work with. The ZFCPHP faculty & staff continue to adapt outreach efforts and community engagement to address ongoing time sensitive issues.



*H2BMe 2023 Summer Interns*

# PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

## Supporting Youth & Families

- **Healthy 2B Me Summer Camp**

The Healthy 2B Me Summer Camp was back in person at three Tucson locations for its 11th year. We welcomed a new staff of MEZCOPH undergraduate interns and a wonderful group of children to Dietz K-8 School, Pasqua Yaqui Boys & Girls Club and the John Valenzuela Youth Center. We enjoyed the summer program with the help of the ZFCPHP Staff and other UA professionals that shared their public health knowledge. The campers always look forward to learning from MEZCOPH students. If you are looking for an interactive internship, look at our website for more information on opportunities with our Center. Our Summer interns included: Addison Gheridini, Angela Mares, Bella Wilson, Jonathan Kim, and Trevor Coates.



- **Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative**

Continued support of the Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative is helping to address the inequities in child health and wellness in Pima County and help combat and prevent the disparities in the vast childhood obesity epidemic families are facing daily. The Zuckerman Family Center is known as a leader in the Tucson community through the progress with our community partnerships in addressing the child obesity issue.

We are excited about our new partnership and collaboration with another diocese school located in South Tucson. The HPS 497/597E Community Health and Wellness Course expanded to St. Johns School's after-school program. Our UArizona college students created and disseminated weekly lessons in the 2023 spring semester. The weekly topics included a lesson in nutrition, physical activity, and social-emotional learning through art immersion activities. Forty-five elementary and middle school students received these lessons each Wednesday afternoon.

We are thrilled to be collaborating with The Roy Drachman Boys and Girls Club of Tucson on an Intergenerational Program named, Healthy Habits Tucson. This program will be working with Arizona students, children ages 7 to 11 years of age and Senior Citizens ages 60 and older who want to give back to their community and work to motivate and instill healthy habits in children in nutrition, movement activities and wellness practices.



## • Wellness Promotion Partnership with Tufts University

UA MEZCOPH and the Activate Tucson Coalition will begin to work with Arizona State Legislatures to advocate for policy change at the state level to address the inequities with the Public-School Tax Credit. This will significantly impact the health and well-being of our underserved community in Pima County and at the state level.

Your support has allowed us to continue the work in the Tucson community to prevent and decrease childhood obesity. Our collaboration with Tufts University's Childhood Obesity 180 Center and the Catalyzing Communities Study has made significant progress, by partnering with Sunnyside Unified School District (SUSD) and the local tax firm BeachFleishman to address the inequity in the Arizona Public School Tax credit distributions and donations. In December 2022 and through January 22, 2023, an ad campaign was highlighted in the Arizona Daily Star Tax Credit insert circular and Tucson.com. Activate Tucson and the Tax Credit working group were thrilled to see the reach in Pima County. The ad campaign raised over \$5,400 for SUSD's Rivera Elementary School for funds for their students' health and wellness. Specifically, it will support addressing anxiety and stress children have been experiencing since the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds will go to updating the Rivera School's Zen Den room (*photos below*) and creating Calming Corners in each classroom. In addition the SUSD District will have a designated Health and Wellness category for the tax donations allocated on their website beginning in the fall of 2023.





*Above: before & after photos of Rivera Elementary Zen Den & Kindergarten teacher picking items for his classrooms Calming Corner*

## Policy, System & Environmental Change

The Arizona Public School Tax Credit is a small part of the school funding ecosystem, however, through the work led by Activate Tucson, this mechanism has been identified to impact child health in a positive way. Specifically, the tax credit targets funds that can support typically under-funded programs in schools that already experience resource restrictions. The tax credit is uniquely designed to support programs like after-school nutrition and athletics. Funds generated through the tax credit can be leveraged to address community-identified drivers of childhood obesity.

The work being done through Activate Tucson seeks to increase the amount of funds generated through the public-school tax credit by partnering with a local, professional tax and financial consulting firm to increase awareness of the credit. Additionally, education and awareness campaigns through local media have encouraged taxpayers to utilize the credit and direct funds to our partner school, Rivera Elementary, a Title 1 school in SUSD. These funds are being used to support teacher-identified health and wellness programming that otherwise would not be available to 2nd-4th grade students. The ongoing tax credit work is a local example of how policy can be leveraged to change environments and make positive health impacts in vulnerable communities.

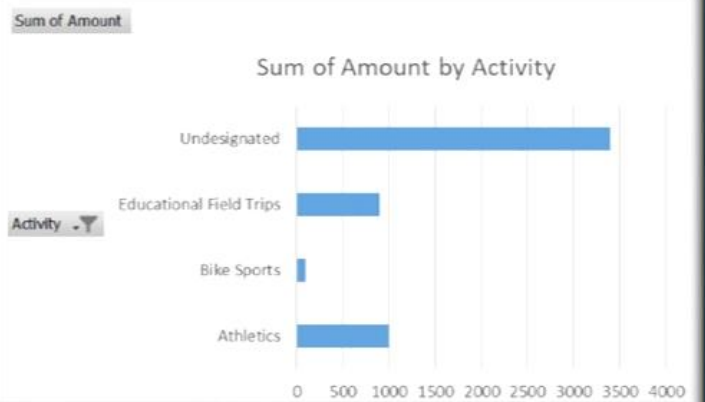
- Continue to generate information for advocacy and awareness campaigns i.e.: newspaper ad, additional education resources to be used by the public in a general campaign and private stakeholders (for internal use at BeachFleischman, where appropriate).
- Understand BeachFleischman employee knowledge, awareness and perception of tax credit and help share what the partnership is trying to achieve with a broader audience by providing presentations, and one-pagers, with clients and Pima County residents.
- Support the goals of the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Action) Committee to expand the reach for equity in Public School Tax Credit
- Meet with Arizona State Legislatures to provide advocacy work to change reporting deadlines and structure of the current Public School Tax donation legislation.
- Continue to partner with the two diocese schools to provide obesity prevention and wellness programming. Re-launch the Wildcat Marathoners walking and running programs at each school.



## SUSD & Rivera Elementary School Update

Met with the principal accountant for Sunnyside USD and he shared the breakdown for this past year:

- Total of \$5400 in tax credits was received by Rivera Elementary School.
  - \$3400 were designated for activities we were hoping to support.
  - This is an average of \$7.56/student (across the total school enrollment)
  - This is an average of \$57.63/3rd grade student.
- Looking ahead the district & school are interested in:
  - Adding a new category called "health & wellness" to help direct those who want to use the credit.
  - Providing more information through their channels and networks.



## • Growing Girls

Growing Girls is a 21-week psychosocial intervention for 5th and 6th grade girls targeted to improve self-esteem, reduce relational aggression, enhance social skills, and improve peer connectedness. The 2022-2023 school year was the eleventh year of Growing Girls at Estes Elementary School and the third year of Growing Girls at Quail Run Elementary School in the Marana Unified School District, directed by Lindsay Bingham, MPH, CHES® (Psychosocial Wellness Program Coordinator, Health Promotion Sciences). Last year, Growing Girls returned to 2-hour sessions after school and was delivered 100% in-person, encouraging consistent attendance and engagement in social emotional learning. Each week, students participated in physical movement (e.g., Blob Tag, Accumulator, yoga/stretching, dancing) and were provided healthy snacks by the school and/or ZFCPHP.

During 2022-2023, 34 girls participated and learned about personal identity, building healthy friendships, positive thinking, self-compassion, assertive communication (i.e., standing up for yourself), solving problems and seeking help, bullying and conflict resolution, media messages, body kindness, development and puberty, self-care, and planning for the future. One graduate student in ASU's MSW program (Zoe Somerville) and three undergraduate University of Arizona students (Maria Arantes, Elise Nochomovitz, and Fernanda Ruiz) served as Growing Girls Group Leaders, facilitating the program across both schools. The Growing Girls facilitators represented 3 colleges across campus and beyond, creating a dynamic multidisciplinary leadership team to support the young people we served. Group Leaders received facilitation preparation and training in the Nurtured Heart Approach® throughout the year to best support their participant groups. One of our highlights of the 2022-2023 school year was our field trip to the University of Arizona with the GAME program where we visited Flandrau Science Center and Planetarium, the Student Recreation Center, and the School of Film, Television, and Theatre. Twenty-six girls graduated from Growing Girls in May after attending over 80% of program sessions.





Currently, Growing Girls is being offered at Quail Run Elementary School on Wednesday afternoons and Estes Elementary School on Thursday afternoons and for 21 weeks. Each cohort of up to twenty-five 5th and 6th grade students is led by 2-3 trained undergraduate Group Leaders who are using our revitalized curriculum with activities inspired by the Nurtured Heart Approach® to build resilience and positive social skills. New materials, slideshows, and activities have been developed by Group Leaders to enhance skill-based learning, including laminated conversation cards and visuals to distinguish conflict versus bullying. This year, we also integrated measures in our surveys to assess students' mental health and sleep. We are already seeing the impact of our program through peer interactions, student comments and reports, and impressive attendance!



### - Guys After-School Mentorship & Education (GAME)**

Guys After-School Mentorship and Education, or “GAME”, is a 21-week psychosocial intervention for 5th and 6th grade boys intended to improve self-esteem, enhance social skills and mental wellbeing, and provide supportive mentoring during the transition to middle school. The 2022-2023 school year was the fifth year of GAME at Estes Elementary School and the third year of GAME at Quail Run Elementary School in the Marana Unified School District, directed by Lindsay Bingham, MPH, CHES® (Psychosocial Wellness Program Coordinator, Health Promotion Sciences). Last year, GAME returned to 2-hour sessions after school and was delivered 100% in-person, encouraging consistent attendance and engagement in social emotional learning. Each week, students participated in 30 minutes of structured, team-based physical movement (e.g., Triad, Accumulator, dodgeball, Blob Tag), 30 minutes of free play, and were provided healthy snacks by the school and/or ZFCPHP.

During 2022-2023, 17 boys participated and learned about managing intense emotions, staying positive, teamwork, responsibility, peer pressure, bullying and conflict resolution, problem solving and asking for help, self-esteem, body image, media messages, development and puberty, and planning for the future. Two undergraduate University of Arizona students (Bernard Adri, Samuel Munyaga), one Quail Run Elementary School staff member (Trevor Lee), and one community volunteer (Ryan Wexelblatt, LCSW, ADHD-CCSP; [ADHD Dude](#)) served as GAME Group Leaders, facilitating the program across both schools. We were lucky to host a diverse group of facilitators from various backgrounds to support and motivate the young people we



served. University of Arizona Group Leaders received facilitation preparation and training in the Nurtured Heart Approach® throughout the year to best support their participant groups. One of our highlights of the 2022-2023 school year was our field trip to the University of Arizona with the Growing Girls program where we visited Flandrau Science Center and Planetarium, the Student Recreation Center, and the School of Film, Television, and Theatre. Fourteen boys graduated from GAME in May after attending over 80% of program sessions.



Currently, GAME is being offered at Quail Run Elementary School on Wednesday afternoons and Estes Elementary School on Thursday afternoons and for 21 weeks. Each cohort of up to twenty 5th and 6th grade students is led by 1-2 trained undergraduate Group Leaders who are using our revitalized curriculum with games and collaborative activities inspired by the Nurtured Heart Approach® to build resilience and self-esteem, reduce peer conflict, and increase social connectedness. This year, we also integrated measures in our surveys to assess students' mental health and sleep. We are already seeing the impact of our program through positive peer interactions among student groups and increased engagement with weekly topics and activities.



- **Healthy Habits Tucson**

In 2023, Healthy Habits Tucson, started at the Roy Drachman Boys and Girls clubhouse in south Tucson. Currently there are 10 participants, one Senior volunteer, and public health interns leading this effort.



## EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

- **Service-Based Learning; Public Health for Community Wellness**

Our new partnership and collaboration with another diocese school located in South Tucson. The HPS 497/597E Community Health and Wellness Course expanded to St. Johns School's after-school program. Our UArizona college students created and disseminated weekly lessons in the 2023 spring semester. The weekly topics included a lesson in nutrition, physical activity, and social-emotional learning through art immersion activities. Forty-five elementary and middle school students received these lessons each Wednesday afternoon.



- *“My daughter has been telling me about the delicious healthy snacks you have been making with the children. She asked me to pick up some of the ingredients so we can make them at home.”*

-Mother of student in the after-school program at St. Johns
- *“I loved that we made nutritious snacks with the kids and being able to explain to them why it is nutritious, and why nutrition was important. Some of the kids do not understand nutrition, or the nutritious value of certain foods, and I think it is very important to start educating the kids while they are young. I know when I was a kid, I was so clueless and it would have been more helpful to be more knowledgeable of nutritious value, so I am happy to be educating them and giving them healthier snack ideas. I loved how we made very creative snacks each week and the students could go home to their families and tell them about what they had for snacks. It gives the families in the community a better understanding of what a nutritious snack is and how simple it is to make it.”*

- Rachel, MEZCOPH Undergraduate Student




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- **Health Promotion Sciences & Public Health for School & Community Based Childhood Obesity Prevention Programming (HPS497-L)**

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The Healthy Schools Tucson (HST) program has reached over 1,400 middle school students with the delivery of lessons focusing on nutrition, physical activity, and wellness education over the past five years. The Student Wellness Questionnaire has evaluated that we have continued to demonstrate that the middle school students have gained meaningful knowledge and acquired critical skills that translate to adopting healthy lifestyles to prevent obesity and ultimately reduce health disparities for vulnerable youth.

The Saints Peter and Paul Middle School (SPPS) continues with enthusiasm to invite back the Healthy Schools Tucson Program and the University of Arizona Zuckerman College of Public Health (UAMEZCOPH) Students to address the childhood obesity issue and other important health and well-being topics for their students. This year, the UAMEZCOPH students were asked to create new content lessons in drug prevention, social media anxiety, and depression prevention. The faculty and staff have been witnessing risky behaviors with their students in drug use and increased depression and anxiety from online activity. These risk behaviors correlate with childhood obesity prevalence. The middle school teachers at SPPS continue to see their students make observable changes in their health and wellness journey by adding healthy foods to their lunches and snacks along with consuming less sugar-sweetened beverages and snack foods. Parent feedback continues to be positive in sharing that they are making changes at home by providing healthier meals, snacks and limiting sugary foods and beverages.





▪ *“I helped my mom make the Overnight Oats recipe and they were way better than I thought they would be! My family likes to eat them for breakfast now!” - 6<sup>th</sup> grade student*

▪ *“I like project healthy schools because they gave me advice on how to be healthier and I liked the recipes they gave me. I really appreciated them coming and telling me about a lot of things and I got to share with my family, and they learned even more than what I did!” - 6<sup>th</sup> grade student*

▪ *“I was very impressed with the Healthy Schools Tucson program. I was not sure, being a new teacher, that my 8<sup>th</sup> grade students would really embrace the learning and lesson content. I was pleasantly surprised! The information that they receive will hopefully resonate with them throughout their lives. Thank you, and we look forward to seeing your UA students back in the spring of 2024.” - Mr. Babb, 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher*

## TRAINING

### • Behavioral Measurements & Interventions Shared Resource (BMISR)

BMISR has a unique model for staffing its shared resource with a student workforce that provides both an enriching training opportunity and a flexible, cost-effective staffing solution for research studies. From 2022 to the present, the BMISR trained 16 undergraduate students and 5 graduate students (3 Masters and 2 PhD Students) in behavioral interventions and behavioral assessment including diet and physical activity methods and health coaching training. Mentoring is a priority task for BMISR co-directors Cynthia Thomson and Jennifer Bea and BMISR manager Angela Yung and as a result, 2 students were accepted in a combined dietetic internship and graduate program and 3 students secured public health or research related employment

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- **Student Transformative Experiences to Progress Underrepresented Professionals (STEP-UP) Summer Research Program**

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The STEP-UP Summer Research Program took a hiatus in 2023 and will be back 2024 with a new program coordinator and a new cohort of eager students ready to learn about Cancer Prevention and Control. Please check our website at the end of the year for more information on this program and how interested students can apply. We would like to welcome Jacquie Stork as the new program coordinator of the Step-Up Program. Jacquie has prior UA experience and is a wonderful asset to our team!

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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Community outreach engagements were once again limited in 2022. Our team worked diligently to provide as many online resources in remote learning settings including a reboot of the ZFCPHP website. As highlighted in this report, our programs continued to adapt content and resources to engage with those hit hardest not only by the pandemic, but the economic fluctuation. The ZFCPHP Health Educators are committed to continue to adapt and accommodate our community as we navigate through the ongoing world changes and balancing a new normal in work conditions.

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- **Mariposa Community Health Center CRC Awareness Health Fair**

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A total of 13 organizations participated in Mariposa's health fair to bring awareness to the deadly disease of colorectal cancer including the University of Arizona's Cancer Center Office of Community Outreach and Engagement and Exact Sciences who had demos on hand of the Cologuard home test. The event was also captured with a live Facebook event on We Love Nogales.

- Fest Your Brain Health Fair**

Sponsored by MEZCOPH and the Precision Aging Network, ZFCPHP staff and students participated in this second annual event. This Brain Health event promotes cognitive health across the lifespan. Our booth provided make your own jigsaw puzzles and information on how to “exercise” your brain.

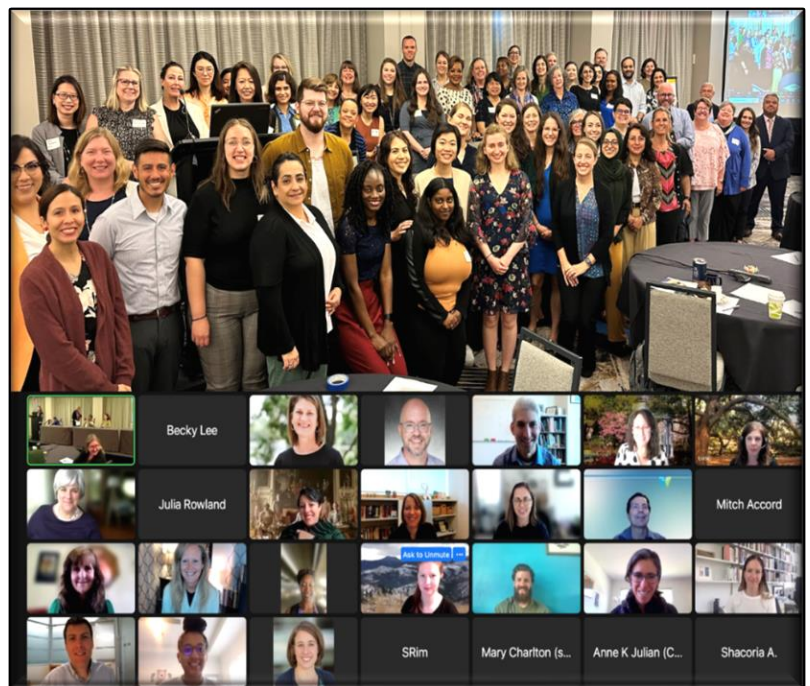


## SUPPORTING NOVEL IDEAS FOR HEALTH PROMOTION

- The Cancer Prevention and Control Research Network (CPCRN)**

### **Largest CPCRN Spring Meeting on Record Atlanta, Georgia, May 2023**

In May 2023, 125 Network members from institutions across the country convened for the CPCRN5 Year 4 Spring Meeting. With the Emory University Collaborating Center serving as the local host, 73 members, including 21 CPCRN Scholars & Scholar Alumni, met in Atlanta for the largest ever in-person CPCRN meeting. Another 52 members joined the event remotely via Zoom.





## OUR PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENTS

Public Health students are an integral part of the ZFCPHP, and we strive to create unique academic and training experiences for the next generation of public health professionals. Graduate level students currently working with ZFCPHP include:

- **Adriena Hernandez**, MPH and Doctoral student, Public Health
- **Erin Kinney**, MPH student, Public Health
- **Fernanda Palafox**, MPH student, Public Health
- **Gloria Cota Aguirre**, Undergraduate Honors student, Public Health
- **Jennifer McElfresh**, Post-Doctoral Researcher
- **Kelli Richardson**, MS student, Nutritional Sciences
- **Lauren Erdelyi**, MPH and Doctoral student, Public Health
- **Michelle Perez-Coronado**, MPH student, Public Health
- **Samantha Werts**, Doctoral student, Public Health

## HEALTH & WELLNESS RESOURCES

The ZFCPHP team is committed to providing programmatic information and health and wellness resources on our website and Facebook page. Center programs and research are showcased via highlights, quarterly newsletters, and individual webpages. It is our goal to begin publishing program curricula within the next year to engage new community partners and stakeholders, therefore increasing access to health education and expanding our reach.

- **Website:** <https://zfcphp.arizona.edu/>
- **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/zfcphp>

## AWARDS / RECOGNITIONS



**Dr. Cynthia Thomson, PhD, MS, CPCR N Principal Investigator at the University of Arizona**, has been invited by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to serve on the External Advisory Board (EAB) for the Metabolic Dysregulation and Cancer Risk Program (MeDOC). This pioneering research consortium aims to identify the mechanistic and etiologic pathways connecting obesity-related metabolic dysregulation with cancer risk, ultimately informing novel cancer prevention strategies. In addition, Dr. Thomson was invite to speak at the National Academies of Sciences Workshop on survivorship. This is a global forum on Innovation in Health Professional Education.



**Dr. David Garcia, PhD, MS, FACSM**, wrote an opinion piece for the *Arizona Sun* titled "Lawmakers Must Protect Arizona's Medicaid Program". In the article, Dr. Garcia discussed the importance of removing structural and systemic barriers that affect early cancer detection and screening efforts, particularly for underserved communities. He emphasized the importance of ensuring access to comprehensive health insurance coverage in order to improve access to cancer prevention and treatment.



**Samantha Werts, MPH, CPCR N Scholar Alumna at the University of Arizona**, was accepted to the University of Arizona Data Science Fellows Program. Fellows participate in a dynamic environment to develop, exchange, and create data science expertise needed to solve cutting edge research problems in health sciences.

**Rosi Vogel** was accepted to the Group Peer Support training in Spanish and was awarded a full scholarship of \$1,200. <https://grouppeersupport.org/about/>

The GPS Group Peer Support approach is a trauma responsive support group model based on evidence informed modalities that has been replicated in diverse communities nationally.

## FUTURE DIRECTION & END OF YEAR DIRECTOR MESSAGE

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**2023** was among the most productive to date. Building on our strategic planning initiative of 2022, we began to implement the designated activities and related strategies to meet our outreach goals. We have learned to work more efficiently by supporting and leveraging community member empowerment for program sustainability. We actively seek public health student engagement as an invaluable source to enhance public health awareness in our community.

In 2024, Dr. David Garcia will join the leadership team as Co-Director of the ZFCPHP Center. In this role, he will support the implementation of the strategic plan and bring new high impact partnerships to our efforts. Welcome David!!!