


**Local Agency Profile**

## Men at WIC - Community Bridges

A few years ago, when **Community Bridges WIC Director, Cathy Cavanaugh**, was unable to find the ideal candidate for a position she had listed, she contacted her HR Director. Recalling the positive experience the WIC team had enjoyed when working with a male dietetic intern, Cathy said that she would be interested in hiring a man for the WIC position if one applied. Perhaps a man at WIC would bring in a new look to the staff, encourage father involvement, and perhaps a fresh perspective for WIC activities

Soon, the HR department passed along a new application to Cathy. Although **Jesus Lopez** was over-qualified for the position advertised, Cathy felt he would be a great addition to the WIC team.

Jesus brought knowledge, passion and a deep sensitivity for the population served by Community Bridges. Jesus was able to easily relate to WIC families. With Jesus conducting classes, Dads, who had often waited in the WIC parking lot while their partners attended counseling and picked up the checks, jammed the group education sessions, participating in discussions, and sharing their concerns. The WIC team appreciated his energy and great teaching talent, as well as his easy-going, gentle and respectful presence in the clinic. Jesus opened the door for more men at Community Bridges WIC.

**Daniel Vasquez** was next to join the WIC team. Daniel's educational background in biochemistry and Latino studies were the perfect preparation for a WIC teacher and coun-

selor. As a soccer player and youth soccer coach, Daniel also brought a love for physical activity that has greatly contributed to employee wellness activities. Daniel's dedication to the community helped make him a very compassionate and dynamic teacher. At the end of one of his HH4L classes, the participants actually gave him a standing ovation!

Cathy says the presence of Jesus and Daniel paved the way for hiring staff with a variety of degrees, such as education, bilingual studies, agriculture sciences, child development, behavioral sciences, art, computers, food science, and other degrees. This adds a greater dimension to the WIC program, and brings in perspectives beyond nutrition.

**Jeremy Lampel** is an RD, with a master's degree in nutrition. As an RD, Jeremy was used to being around lots of women! He came to WIC with experience working with local organic farmers as well as clinical experience; but his experience teaching nutrition to Spanish speaking families for a local pediatrician and his commitment to making fresh fruits and vegetable more accessible in the community, made him a perfect fit for public health and WIC! Jeremy is a jack of all trades, and is as comfortable creating a new recipe for food demonstration as he is teaching, troubleshooting computer and facility problems, and promoting breastfeeding. In the words of a coworker, "...nothing has been the same at WIC since Jeremy came!"

**Limber Quiroz**, the latest addition to the team, is one of the



*Jesus Lopez teaches a **Healthy Habits** cooking demo class.*

WIC receptionists, and is frequently a "first point of contact" for WIC families. His patience and compassion instantly make WIC clients feel comfortable. His humor and willingness to work so cooperatively with his mostly female coworkers makes him a favorite among staff. With four male WIC staff, the idea came up to strategize ways that WIC could partner with **PAPÁS**, a support group for Dads, to increase father involvement at WIC. The team quickly decided to offer GA classes for "fathers only", as an option for WIC families.

"The name WIC excludes the presence of men at our program, and many men do not think that they have a place at WIC. Consciously recruiting men in WIC has changed the working atmosphere for staff and our clients, and clearly states that WIC is also a place where men are welcome, respected and valued," says Cathy.

Thanks to Cathy's vision and her staff's support and enthusiasm for new ideas, her program's objectives have been modified to create opportunities for men to serve as mentors and role models, and actively strengthen the community. **Aligning practice with policy, Community Bridges WIC is demonstrating the powerful impact men play in improving the health and wellbeing of WIC families.**