

Creating Opportunities for Children

Nervous laughter mixed with perspiration as children attending the Latino Community Development Agency's summer program danced to Salsa music during a Zumba class.



Children participating in the Latino Community Development Agency's summer camp program follow the steps of a Zumba instructor as part of a fitness class. The camp was funded in part by an Opportunities for Children iFund grant.

The class of 7-10 year olds clearly enjoyed following the instructor's every move. The class helped to reinforce that there are fun ways to stay fit, just one of several life skills taught during a three-week day camp. The summer program provided two camps for different age groups with priority given to children from single-parent homes or who had major socioeconomic needs. Thanks to an Opportunities for Children iFund grant, the camps were staffed and were able to offer a full agenda of both educational and fun experiences for the children at a cost of only \$10 a child.

"The grant was a blessing to the children and they really enjoyed everything about the camp," says Jonathan Lopez, one of several camp instructors.

The summer program also provided a safe place for the children to understand the importance of a positive self image. Presentations by the Oklahoma County Sheriff's Department helped to educate the children about gang prevention, gun safety and alcohol and drug prevention. Jonathan said the students were also taught basic nutritional tips. By the end of the camp, Jonathan said he sees a gain in self confidence among the students which is an important first step in helping the children realize they have a choice in how to live their lives. He added that the agency will keep track of the students when the camps end and find mentors for many of them.

The children were also treated to fun new experiences like splashing around at a water park, learning to bowl and visiting the Oklahoma City Zoo. These activities exposed the children to what's available in their community.

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