



## **Woodcraft Rangers Afterschool Program at San Antonio Elementary**

A Healthy Behaviors Learning Center

6222 State Street, Huntington Park, CA 90255

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### **About the Program**

**Woodcraft Rangers** has a proud 88-year history of providing innovative and creative programs for children in the underserved areas of greater Los Angeles. Currently, Woodcraft Rangers reaches out to over 18,000 at-risk young people annually through enriching afterschool and camping programs. The organization's programs are responsive to social trends and designed to help children and youth mature into healthy, productive adults through positive experiences and age-appropriate challenges. San Antonio Elementary is one of Woodcraft Ranger's 61 afterschool sites in the Los Angeles area. It also serves as one of fourteen Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers that work with other afterschool programs to help them improve students' eating habits and physical fitness by intentionally integrating physical activity and nutrition education with youth development principles and practices. The program aims to inspire its students and families to choose to be healthy through education and role modeling. Over the last four years at San Antonio Elementary, Woodcraft Rangers has demonstrated the effectiveness of its approaches and impact on students' lives.

Woodcraft Rangers at San Antonio Elementary serves a high poverty student population that is 95-98 percent Latino in the Huntington Park area of Los Angeles. The staff demographic of Woodcraft Rangers mirrors that of the student population. In fact, most of the staff members were raised in the direct community and attended area elementary, middle and high schools themselves. The program operates Monday through Friday from the end of the school day until 6 p.m. The staff to student ratio is 1:20. Up to 130 students grades K-5 attend the program every day.

Activities offered include:

- **Physical Activity:** Every day, students participate in 30-45 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity, which includes a wide variety such as dance, leadership and team building games. In addition to the fitness period, students can select to participate in a fitness or sports club for the remainder of the day. Fitness and sports clubs may include Cir-Kitz, dance/drill, cheer, martial arts, Zenergy Yoga and team sports (flag football, soccer, basketball and softball). Special fitness activities are often offered as "Fun Friday" events and encourage parents to come out and participate. Children and staff also participate in a Run-a-thon Program where they

work to achieve their personal best and can see improvement. Since the Huntington Park region of schools is so tightly knit, walking field trips allow drummers to march to perform at a local middle school, the soccer team can walk to another elementary program for friendly pick-up games and the Leadership Club is often in the community doing clean-up days at local parks.

- **Nutrition Education:** Students receive nutrition education that emphasizes social and emotional connections to healthy behaviors and includes classroom lessons, and food and snack preparation. For example, the program offers a Wellness Club that focuses on how to prepare healthy meals. “Top Chef” style competitions make the learning especially engaging. In addition, a Healthy Choices Award System earns a child a reward ticket for making a healthy choice whenever he or she receives snack including fruit and chooses to eat it.
- **Parent Involvement** includes Family Fitness and Nutrition Nights, where all ages work out, play together and learn healthier ways to cook classic ethnic dishes. Information is also available to parents regarding assistance programs such as WIC and Food Stamps, and local resources for free groceries through churches and community centers in the area. Eligible families are also referred to the backpack program offered by the LA Regional Food Bank, where children leave school each Friday with enough nutritional food to prepare six meals over the weekend.

### **Impact and Accomplishments**

Over the past four years, Woodcraft Rangers at San Antonio Elementary has demonstrated that it is changing lives and making a positive impact on kids, families, schools and communities. The program tracks progress using Fitnessgram data, attendance records, participant and parent surveys, and feedback from parent focus groups. Results include:

- Staff are changing their own eating habits to serve as good models for the students. Staff have refrained from bringing sodas and junk food to work and participate in physical activities with the students.
- Parents and staff have committed to providing only healthy food for program culminations.
- The program works with the school cafeteria staff and district personnel to further influence purchasing of afterschool snacks.
- Many parents come to participate with their children during Fun Fitness Friday activities.
- Many parents approach staff with questions regarding information their children were sharing with them (i.e., eat whole wheat bread instead of white, drink low fat milk instead of whole milk, etc.).
- Improvements are being seen both academically and behaviorally. Improved API scores for the '08-'09 school year were partially attributed to the program. Several of the students participating after school have special needs, and all excelled within the program as well as during the school day.
- A first annual Family Wellness event was held in the spring of 2009 and featured booths focused on statistics and information, healthy recipes, fitness activities and shopping for healthy foods on a budget. It was such a success that the school scheduled a six-week Health & Wellness series in collaboration with Woodcraft Rangers that began in March 2010 and gained in parent participation each week.

## **Partnerships**

Many partners have helped ensure the success of the program. They include:

- Center for Collaborative Solutions
- California State University, LA
- Wal-Mart
- Panda Express
- Pollo Camparo
- LA Sparks