

4-H Color Me Green Run and All 4-Health Fair

BY SHANNA ABATTI | UCCE 4-H Program Representative

This past Sunday over 225 community members and 39 health and wellness booths painted the city of Imperial green during the 3rd annual Color Me Green 5k and all 4-Health Fair. As in other color runs that have become popular across the country, runners were showered with colored powder at various stations along the run. While some participants were watching their times, and trying to beat their personal best, many, and maybe even most runners, were there to have a color-blasting good time. Runners and walkers of all ages came out and supported Imperial County 4-H for a day packed with activities.

The Color Me Green 5K Runs are 5-kilometer runs (or walks) designed to encourage youths and community members to increase their physical activity while also having fun. During each run, participants are showered with colored dye as they pass through each marker point. Each color station was loaded with 4-H youths armed and ready to cover participants with green-dyed (but harmless) cornstarch out of spray bottles as they ran by. This run, hosted by 4-H youth members, was a great opportunity for our communities to come together and celebrate healthy living and being physically active. Instead of the traditional medals and ribbons at the finish line, participants could pick from an array of fresh vegetables generously donated by local growers. All participants also received a "swag bag" that doubles as a reusable grocery bag in the form of a strawberry.

The primary goal of this year's 5k was to encourage healthy habits and educate the community on the benefits of exercise, even if it's just an afternoon walk. In addition to planning, organizing and leading the run, 4-H youth also organized an "All 4-Health Fair" to complement this year's walk/run. Thirty-nine local health agencies, awareness groups and wellness vendors were on hand to provide nutrition education, free health screenings, local exercise gyms/venues, yoga, essential oils, beauty products and the sharing of resources to help community members find health services here locally in Imperial County.

Since its founding, 4-H has addressed national issues including nutrition, fitness and safety in its programs, as well as social and emotional well-being. 4-H Healthy Living programs encompass a holistic approach that includes healthy eating habits, physical fitness, the capacity to recognize and direct emotions and the ability to develop and maintain positive social interactions and relationships.

The California 4-H Healthy Living programs are developed and conducted by the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources and seek to address national issues including nutrition, physical fitness, substance abuse, safety, and social and emotional wellness.

Three years ago, a team of youths organized this run to bring awareness to the 4-H program locally and to increase healthy habits in the community. Since its inception, the run/walk has tripled in participation and this year has garnered national 4-H media attention. Events like this cannot be possible without the generous support of local community members, volunteers, growers and larger foundations such as the Vesper Society. If you are interested in joining for 4-H as a member, community partner or supporter, please call or email Shanna Abatti at 760-352-9474 or smabatti@ucanr.edu

