Title: Evaluation of the FARMacy Program – A Prescription for a Healthier Community

Introduction: The FARMacy program began in 2017, and is a partnership between the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension's Tucson Village Farm (TVF), UA College of Medicine, and El Rio Health Centers. El Rio pediatric patients and their families are referred to TVF through a written prescription, to attend a FARMacy program, where they experience hands-on nutrition, gardening and culinary education, physical activity and mindfulness coaching and access to fresh food. In 2018, TVF 4-H Healthy Living Ambassadors (youth ages 14-18) were recruited and trained to lead the educational programs.

Methods/Activities: Participants were asked to complete an evaluation survey, assessing if they planned to use the information they learned during the program, at home. The teen facilitators were evaluated with the 4-H Common Measures instrument for Healthy Living Teen Leaders, and focus groups that were held at the end of their 5-month long commitment. Focus groups were also held with people who chose to participate in the program and those who did not. These data will be utilized to determine if the program should be continued or expanded as a method of incorporating prevention education into traditional medical care practices.

Results/Outcomes: Participants: The evaluation survey asked participants what they planned to do after attending the program and the results have been very promising. A majority of the participants stated that they intended to change their habits in nearly all of the categories, which included eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking more water and less sweetened beverages, eating more whole grains, preparing more food at home, saving money on healthy food items, becoming more physically active and practicing mindfulness techniques.

Teen Leaders: Information obtained through focus groups conducted with teen leaders showed that they learned a great deal of information on how to be healthier themselves and were teaching family and friends to utilize the tools they learned through the program. Two more FARMacy programs are scheduled for April and May 2019.

Discussion: Through its extensive partnership network, the FARMacy Program is changing the way the medical community is confronting nutrition-related disease in Tucson’s children. These evaluation results show that the educational components of the program are effective at convincing program participants and teen leaders to utilize simple strategies in their life to improve their health. These results demonstrate that the model is worth pursuing for expansion and an implementation protocol will be developed to assist with that effort.