

**Organization:** Pa'lante

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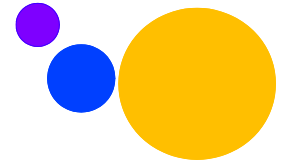
**County:** Orange**Address:** P.O. Box 17212  
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27516**Phone:** 919-428-6296**Website:** <http://radiopalante.org/home-en.html>**Project:** Educational Sessions for Teen Health and Wellness***\*\*Below are excerpts from their final report\*\****

**About the Project:** The N.C. Healthy Start Foundation's Community Grants Program catalyzed the formation of Pa'lante Yoga, an underage drinking prevention program disguised as a series of eight yoga, self-defense, and modeling workshops. The target population for this pilot program was Latina girls in grades 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school district. School social workers helped identify and recruit 11 girls to participate in the two-hour weekly workshops, which began March 31.

Each workshop consists of one hour of yoga instruction and one hour of interactive instruction on an additional topic. To date, the participants have received three hours of self-defense instruction, led by a double-black belt in karate; three hours of media literacy instruction, led by a media studies professor at UNC-Chapel Hill; and one hour of skin care instruction, led by a freelance makeup artist; and an hour of runway modeling instruction, led by a professional model.

Each student has been paired with a mentor. Mentors include: two professors, one researcher, one student from UNC-Chapel Hill, three social workers from the school district, one mother, two independent social workers, and one member of the Latina community who is a Pa'lante alumnus. The students and mentors each received a journal at the beginning of the program. Each week a journal prompt that reinforces the theme of the workshop is assigned. The mentors and the students discuss their journal entries over the course of the week and are afforded the opportunity to discuss their responses in class. Journal assignments have included:

- What do you want to be doing in three years? What are you doing today to help you reach that goal?
- What are some things that make you anxious? What can you do to calm yourself?
- What daily challenges do you give yourself, or can you give yourself, to prepare yourself for unexpected challenges?
- What is the image of yourself that you want other people to perceive? What are some things you can do to make others see you that way?



- What are some things that people have asked you to do, or might ask you to do, that you do not feel comfortable doing? Why do these things make you uncomfortable? What are some ways you can refuse to do them?

The girls who complete the Pa'lante Yoga program will perform in a fashion show at Pa'lante's annual celebration of Latino high school graduates (Noche de Estrellas or Night of the Stars). Noche will take place on June 11<sup>th</sup> at the United Church of Chapel Hill. The target audience is Latino high school and middle school students and their families. Noche de Estrellas is our opportunity to disseminate the positive messages the girls developed in Pa'lante Yoga to the wider youth community. In addition to modeling clothes, the models will deliver a message about personal health and goals. University Mall will provide clothing and styling, and Chapel Hill-Carrboro high school students who participate in the cosmetology program at Alamance Community College will style the models' hair and makeup. Five Pa'lante Yoga participants are planning Noche de Estrellas. Additional plans for the evening include a play about how politics is affecting Latino immigrant students' access to higher education (performed by members of the Adelante Youth Program directed by Student Action with Farmworkers); a potential performance by Sacrificial Poets, a youth poetry ensemble; information tables staffed by local agencies serving youth; and a DJ dance.

**Successes:** The goal of Pa'lante Yoga is to reduce the use of alcohol among Latina teens (i.e. helping them articulate personal reasons why they would not want to drink, developing a relationship with an adult who would support their decision not to drink, and training them to use tools to refuse offers of alcohol).

Statements elicited from the girls show that interim goals (such as improved self-confidence, increased communication with trusted adults, and knowledge of healthy ways to reduce stress) have been achieved. Being assigned individual mentors, even for this short period of time, is an effective strategy. As one girl said, "I like the fact that we have mentors because they help us a lot and are like our friends." One girl's mother was able to participate as her mentor, which has improved their relationship. She said, "Pa'lante has also helped me talk to my mom more and gave me confidence to talk to her in any situation." A mentor wrote:

"[My mentee] has had some difficulties at home, and as a result, I think she has few adults with whom she can speak comfortably and honestly. She has done so with me, particularly regarding her challenges in building a positive relationship with her mother and step-father."

The girls have discovered that yoga is a healthy and effective antidote to stress. As one averred, "Pa'lante Yoga has been the answer to stress! Since our class is Sunday night, I get home and sleep. I feel energetic the following day. I love it." The intimate class size and interactive instruction has helped the girls grow in their own self-confidence and in their commitment to their peers' success.

Additional quotes from participants:

"Pa'lante Yoga for me has been a way to forget all my problems and be able to relax in a comfortable environment because we all respect each other."

“I love the self-defense classes because they have helped me so much in being stronger, not necessarily physically but also mentally.”

N.C. Healthy Start Foundation’s invitation to develop a program focusing on the health of Latina girls catalyzed the creation of Pa'lante Yoga (a science-based program reinforcing the health messages delivered in the schools by helping the students develop the tools they need to withstand the pressures to make unhealthy choices). Midway through the course of the pilot program, the girls are already advocating for its continuation and expansion. One girl said, “I would like the Pa'lante Yoga program to continue because it helps you so much when you are stressed, and the truth is I would like to see this program continue because I would like to be in it.”