



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Couple's Success with Tomando Program Leads to Teaching Others

PORTLAND, OR – Tomando Control de su Salud, Spanish for “taking control of your health”, is a free, self-management education workshop for those suffering from chronic health issues and diabetes. Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic offers the workshop, commonly referred to as simply Tomando, to help participants learn how to better manage their health.

According to Stacy Hackenmueller, Integrated Care Services Program Director at Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, the program has been offered for about seven years. Classes, taught in English and Spanish, are currently available in person at nine locations (two more will be available later this year), and virtually at all locations.

Diane Nelson Cooper and her husband Christian Cooper (Chris) are two of Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic’s 17 Tomando instructors. They teach the course at Salud Medical Center in Woodburn, Lancaster Family Health Center at Lancaster in Salem, and Rosewood Family Health Center in Portland, as well as virtually. The couple discovered the program while seeking information on how to control their diabetes. Their experience with the program was so overwhelmingly positive they went on to become Tomando instructors.

“I was kind of hooked,” said Diane Nelson Cooper, who explained they learned a lot from the program which helped them lose weight and improve their health. Since becoming involved in Tomando Diane has cured her diabetes and her husband Chris has lowered his A1C.

“I try to relay that in the classes,” she went on to say. “We were able to do this. It’s hard work. It’s not easy, and it took several years to get to the point we’re at now, but that helped us.”

Diane feels their personal struggles with chronic disease helps give them more credibility with program participants.

“We are able to connect on a much more personal level with them because of that,” said Diane. “We give personal journey stories, so if we are talking about low blood sugars, we talk about our personal low blood sugar experience. They know that we are just like them.”

As instructors, one of the things Diane and Chris like is how the program brings participants together and allows them to share their experiences with chronic disease.

“Patients are coming and giving personal journey stories,” said Diane. “You might learn something from that patient, like, oh, I never thought about using chia seeds in my pudding or just little helpful hints that you pick up from others.”

Diane and Chris enjoy seeing the progress participants make as their health improves.

“We see people reduce the medication they are reliant upon,” said Diane. We’ve had patients go off insulin all together. We’ve seen patients reduce their lab work, called an A1 C, which is a determinant of your diabetes. We’ve seen patients that needed to lose weight lose some. We’ve seen patients develop better relationships with their healthcare providers.”

The program is open to Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic patients and their immediate family members. The classes are one night a week for seven weeks and each class is about two to two and a half hours long.

“I would just encourage anyone who is wanting to change their health outcome to consider taking our classes,” said Diane.

PHOTO: Christian Cooper and Diane Nelson Cooper

Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic is one of the Pacific Northwest's largest community health centers, providing medical, dental, behavioral health and social services to more than 195,000 people a year. With more than 50 unique service locations across Oregon (Clatsop, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, and Yamhill counties) and Washington (Benton, Franklin, Spokane, Walla Walla, and Yakima counties), we deliver affordable, comprehensive primary care for underserved populations in our communities. We also extend our network of care through our mobile health units and virtual visit technology, bringing essential care to our more remote patients. Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic employs over 1,800 staff in addition to our medical and dental residents, fellows, students, and volunteers. All of whom are dedicated to bringing quality care to those in our communities who need it most. Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization recognized by HRSA, The Joint Commission, and The National Committee for Quality Assurance for our accomplishments in community health care. For more information, please visit yvfwc.com/press. Newsletter sign up at yvfwc.com/newsletter.

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