

VISTA / SAN MARCOS NEWS

Local clinic celebrates fruit and veggie month

■ **Health pros stress importance of fresh produce**

VISTA — Less than 11 percent of Americans meet the daily intake for both fruits and vegetables. The lack of produce consumption leads to elevated risks for many illnesses including diabetes.

On Sept. 11, Vista Community Clinic hosted "Parking Produce in Our Lives," an event celebrating National Fruit and Vegetable Month. The afternoon was designed to increase access to and awareness about local produce options.

From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. a local farmer sold organic produce from a special stand erected in the parking lot of the clinic's Program Offices, connecting patients and staff directly to the farmer. This was the first time many of the attendees had shopped "farmer-direct."

The clinic's staff nutritionist Lizette Franks demonstrated healthy recipes, offered free samples and answered audience questions. Petra Fronze, the clinical program assistant, prepared a 45-calorie apple baklava.

Patients from the diabetes education group took a "field

trip" to the parking lot where they shopped together and then visited the classrooms to hear from the clinic's staff nutritionist.

National Fruit and Vegetable Month is sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Produce for Better Health Foundation.

Vista Community Clinic encourages staff to "practice what they preach."

On Sept. 18, during the Clinical Programs meeting, staff engaged in an exercise demonstration and cooking demonstration featuring healthy breakfast foods.

Thirty-five of the clinic's staff recently signed on to America on the Move, a national program to increase daily exercise and decrease caloric intake.

The clinic also offers a Harvest of the Month newsletter to educate staff about seasonal fruits and vegetables.

Vista Community Clinic is a private nonprofit provider of comprehensive primary health care and health education with a focus on those in need because of economic, social or cultural barriers. To learn more, call (760) 631-5000 or visit vistacommunityclinic.org.



BEST MEDICINE Diabetes STEPS provider and Nurse Practitioner Pamela Veliardi shops for fruits and vegetables during the "Parking Produce in Our Lives" event. The event was held in the parking lot at Vista Community Clinic in celebration of National Fruit and Vegetable Month. *Courtesy photo*