

# Silvia "Lily" Salazar

## *Hidalgo County Wellness Program Champion of the Month*

Silvia Salazar, who also goes by "Lily", first heard about the Employee Wellness Program when it was established four years ago. That was also around the time she started working for Hidalgo County as an outreach worker, promoting health at the Precinct 2 Community Resource Center in San Juan.

For the past eight years, Salazar has been voluntarily giving Zumba classes at the resource center, as well as yoga instruction. This was something she wanted to do a couple of years after she was diagnosed with an illness.

"Ten years ago [doctors] diagnosed me with lupus and went through four years of dialysis," Salazar disclosed. "So I have to take care of myself."

She also implemented yoga into her classes, which she started doing after spending eight months in the hospital. Salazar explained the disease had already taken its toll on her body when doctors found it.

"My lungs collapsed," she shared. "My muscles got affected and I left the hospital not able to walk."

Yoga became a fire to light the way toward recovery. "I started slowly with moving one leg at a time, then my arms, with some medication," she explained. "For me, yoga was my therapy that helped me to regain the ability to walk and to gain my life back. It's special to me because it was important in my recovery."



### **Silvia "Lily" Salazar Outreach Worker at Precinct 2**

From yoga, Salazar explained she moved on to weights, then to Zumba.

"Zumba is for the heart. It's cardio. It's with music from the past and present. All types of music to dance and motivate you. I even gave a class to the health department," she said. "There's a lot of shouting. So if you want to shout, shout and let it out, it will help you."

Now that Salazar is more aware of her health

“  
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When you are  
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Know someone who should  
be a Wellness Champion?  
Nominate them!



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needs when the Employee Wellness Program came around, she was really happy county officials created it as an effort to get employees healthy. She also expressed how she can see that the program has created comradery among coworkers.

“A lot of people, when they are by themselves, don’t get motivated,” she said. “When a buddy says, ‘C’mon let’s go! We’re going to do this, we’re going to take this class.’ I see [the program] more as it unites us, it helps us.”

Salazar saw this first hand at the free fitness classes provided by the Precinct 2 Indoor Sports Complex a few times. Another wellness initiative she uses is trying to tune in to the Deer Oak Employee Assistance Program webinars. She recalled some that covered topics about conflicts in the workplaces and stress being very helpful.

“There are places like the CSA that can help you with rent, the water and light bills, but not with stress. Sometimes we have to remember it’s out of our hands, but with the trainings we learn how to let go,” described Salazar.

At home, Salazar and her husband encourage their five children to be active and exercise.

“We have to be the ones who start [being active] so that the kids will also do it. Then hopefully in the future they won’t have health issues and if they do, they won’t feel it as much,” she stated.

Just as she tells her children, she wants to tell young adults to take care of themselves now to prevent different illnesses.

“Don’t think because you feel young that nothing will happen. You can get to a point where you can start to have problems – even when you are young – there are different illnesses. When you are exercising you can prevent a lot of it,” she stressed.

The same goes for older adults. She highly recommends to take walks during breaks. If possible, walk for 30 minutes to an hour.

“Go to the sports complex, get active! Give time to yourself to take care of yourself,” she exclaimed. “For those who have not been involved with the [Wellness] Program – get involved. It’s a good program for your health – physical fitness and mental health – it helps you. See it as your therapy.”

