



ANCHOR

ACCELERATING NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH OUTCOMES THROUGH REINFORCING PARTNERSHIPS

SOUTHERN CHESTER COUNTY, PA: A BILINGUAL HEALTHY FOODS CAMPAIGN



Although Chester County, Pennsylvania is one of the wealthiest places in the country, it also deals with poverty and food issues. Much of the poverty is concentrated in the southern end of the county, where migrant workers, who are mostly Hispanic, are attracted by the area's many mushroom farms. A coalition, supported by the American Heart Association, [ACTIVATE Kennett Square](#), and several media partners, has created a bilingual nutrition education and awareness campaign that highlights seasonal produce and local farmers markets. The campaign is tracking sales data at local markets to evaluate the work's impact on market traffic, specifically on the increase in customers using supplemental nutrition benefits. To continue to build off of the improved familiarity with farmers markets, the coalition plans to work with local settings to create pop-up markets in food deserts countywide.

The Challenge

Chester County is the mushroom capital of the world, where many wealthy people live. But because of language barriers, education levels and low wages for migrant workers who are drawn to the mushroom farms, nearly 15 percent of the residents in the southern part of the county live in poverty. Poverty is a determinant for other social and public health issues, such as lack of access to healthy food. People of Hispanic descent, who make up a large portion of Southern Chester County, are at a greater risk of cardiovascular disease than whites.



“It is important for public and private sectors of the community to work together to provide healthy food access to the Latino population.”

- Tracy Weldon, Regional Campaign Manager, American Heart Association

The Solution

A coalition led by the American Heart Association and ACTIVATE Kennett Square, along with several media partners, used traditional and social media to send out a series of ads targeted primarily at Latino residents. The messages are focused on healthy eating and suggest places to purchase healthy foods. One partner, Hispano Magazine, helped produce a farmers markets guide and seasonality chart, solely in Spanish, for fall 2015. The goal of the campaign is to impact sales of farmers markets in southern Chester County and increase the number of customers using nutrition benefits to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

Sustaining Success

To maintain the success of the campaign, the coalition is creating pop-up farmers markets in popular gathering points countywide. The goal is to take the burden out of healthy shopping by bringing the stand to the residents. For example, in the Avon Grove School District, the coalition is supporting a farm stand at back-to-school night. This initiative will act as a model for others to adopt throughout the county. Working strategically with the Chester County Food Bank, small farm stands will be placed at popular events such as school fairs and mushroom festivals in areas where access to healthy food is limited.

The Healthy Living Coalition will build on the lessons learned from the Tulsa Health Department and the efforts undertaken within Oklahoma City to adopt a similar approach in implementing healthy vending options within large businesses and other organizations.



Policy, System and Environmental Change

Popular community settings such as schools are now viewed as places that provide healthy food access to the public and not simply to students. When public and private sectors band together to increase access to healthy foods, the ripple effects reach the entire community.

Results

The farmers markets guide disseminated by Hispano Magazine has the potential to affect 8,000 residents of Southern Chester County and to impact their shopping habits. The campaign is continuing, and the initiative has encouraged other community stakeholders to design their own plans to increase healthy food access. Local churches and food pantries are in discussion about innovative ways to provide nutrition education and healthy food and beverage options to their clients. The coalition will develop additional ideas as sales numbers from the existing markets are evaluated.

Get Involved

The campaign and the small pop-up farm stands represent multiple businesses and community partners working together to create a healthier Chester County. With the public's help, the coalition can bring healthy food access to each community in the county. If you live, work or play in a community with low access to healthy food, please share your story. Awareness is the first step to making change.