

Healthy Plaquemines Now: Improving Access to Local Farmers' Markets

October 31, 2015

Summary

Crescent City WIC Services INC. (CC WIC) pilots the residents living in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana to a higher ground of healthy living! A lack of access to fresh, healthy foods are contributing to poor diets and higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases in the Parish.

To overcome the access obstacles, this project is seeking to transform local policies, systems, beliefs and practices so that healthier choices become real, feasible options for people living in Plaquemines Parish.



Get involved

If you are also looking for ways to make healthy options more accessible in your community, here are organizations that can help. For nutritional information for low-income women, children and infants, contact your local WIC program: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts>. If you need nutritional information for your community's seniors, visit: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/wic-contacts> to learn about the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

Challenge

“We need this for our people in the southern end of our parish.”

Patti Vogt, owner and operator of Vogt Farms, USDA Farmers Market Nutrition Program for WIC and Seniors in Plaquemines Parish

Many of the residents of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana don't live close to grocery stores. When shopping for groceries locally, there are very few healthy, affordable options to choose. This 2,567 square mile area has only 2 grocery stores and 4 year-round farmers' markets. Figures show that over 41% of the adults living in this parish have high blood cholesterol, 31% are diagnosed with high blood pressure, and 33% of adults ages 20 and over are considered to be obese. A lack of access to fresh, healthy foods are contributing to poor diets and higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases. To overcome the access obstacles, this project will need to transform local policies, systems, beliefs and practices within cultural norms so that healthier choices become real, feasible options for people living in Plaquemines Parish.

Solution

Crescent City WIC Services INC. (CC WIC), acting as the backbone organization, launched the Healthy Plaquemines Now (HPN) project in March 2015. We were awarded a Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) grant, and were among the 17 local WIC agencies selected for the first cohort of the CPHMC project. This 15-month project administered by the National WIC Association is aimed at reducing and preventing chronic disease by improving access to healthy food environments. In order to make healthy selections affordable, HPN will work with local farmers' markets and facilitate them in completing the paperwork so that their markets can start accepting SNAP and WIC.



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Sustaining Success

While this 15-month funding period is a start, it will only be the beginning of an established system of change. As we discuss at each meeting, to sustain success, the HPN coalition will have to infuse portions of each of our organization's programming into the activities of this project in order to continue progress beyond the funding period. If we want to have a larger, ongoing impact on this community, we will have to collaborate on activities, share training opportunities, co-locate services when possible, host campaigns during specific health observance months, and seek additional funding as committee.



Result

The HPN coalition worked together to develop a Community Action Plan (CAP) in order to build capacity for residents living in this rural community to become health conscious and live full lives. Our coalition has recruited the local churches as members: The preachers regularly attend our meetings, have opened their church doors and even preach sermons related to our cause. The local school district has played an important role in developing strategies for to accomplish our goals. And our local farmers are working to become SNAP and WIC friendly.