OPT IN for Healthy Options on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

Joani Donohoe

Summary
Everyone likes to go out to eat at a restaurant as a special treat. Now, selecting a Healthy Options menu item allows you to dine out and enjoy a delicious meal for your palate and health for your whole body. Every designated menu item has been analyzed for the reasonable calorie count, light on sodium and sugar, no trans fats and use of locally grown produce and seafood harvested from local waters. All partner restaurants are locally owned and supporting a Healthy Options restaurant is helping a local small business on the Eastern Shore.

Challenge
Despite the abundance of locally grown produce and seafood on a fertile 70 mile peninsula, adult obesity rates top 38%, according to the Virginia Health Department. This ranks 25 of 29 health districts in the state. According to the United States Department of Agriculture studies, consumers unwittingly may eat almost twice the calories when dining out than they do at home.

Your Involvement is Key
We need your help to support these participating businesses who are looking out for your health. visit them, make suggestions for new menu items and let us know how we are doing. Visit us at www.eshealthycommunities.org and see how you can work with us as we continue on the path to better living by improving life on the Eastern Shore where we work, learn, eat and play for our health, our children's health and future generations.

In 2012, the Eastern Shore Healthy Communities (ESHC) coalition partnered with the Eastern Shore Health District (ESHD) as a result of being awarded a HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) grant from CDC. The goal was to engage our partners and local restaurants to join together to offer proper portion sizes with appropriate calories, sodium, fat protein and sugar for adults and children on their menus. This was the start of the 'Healthy Options Restaurant' program on the Eastern Shore. Sustainability of this initiative in 2015 was sparked when the ESHD and ESHC coalition were awarded a grant by the Community Partnership for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC). This opportunity will allow the initiative to grow stronger and flourish on the shore.
Results

Presently in the third year, this initiative has retained 13 active partners. Several restaurants have requested to add additional menu items to their fare and even more will be submitting new menu items this season. Additionally, newly opening restaurants are interested in applying to be partners. One potential applicant cited the "creative marketing campaign with a focus on fresh, local, healthy eating and supporting local businesses."

Contact

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Sustainable Success

The initiative's goal is to recruit an additional 4 restaurants this year with a focus on diversity of fare and price point. Also, we plan to have most of our partners add several more menu items to their menus. We also plan to connect more restaurants with local farmers and watermen to make better use of local fare. Strengthening our marketing to reach a wider audience both through media and our coalition members and partners as well as a wider base of the community is in the works.

Success Stories

http://nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccessstories/