Summary

The first annual Food Summit on Virginia’s Eastern Shore addresses food insecurity in our community by focusing on increasing access to healthier foods to reduce chronic illnesses. To accomplish this goal, we assembled a variety of representatives from organizations including the Food Bank, the public school system, and WIC to develop an action-based strategy to increase awareness of existing resources, expand upon existing programs, and to adopt best practices from other communities.

Challenges

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.

In 2013, there were at total of 6,940 insecure people on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, including a total of 1,960 children. Extended periods of food insecurity have been linked to a number of chronic conditions including diabetes, hypertension, and obesity, all of which are prevalent in our community.

Solutions

Eastern Shore Healthy Communities, Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, and Smart Beginnings Eastern Shore formed a partnership to host the Food Summit which took place on March 30, 2016. During the 4-hour event, the community leaders present were provided with an opportunity to hear presentations and panelists discuss the extent of food insecurity in our community, as well as potential policy, system, and environmental change strategies to target the issue. After being presented with the data, six mini summits were formed where stakeholders were able to process what they had learned, and provide suggestions on our next steps.

Your Involvement is Key

We need your help to support these participating organizations who are fighting against food insecurity. 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, and the health of future generations.
Results

More than 80 community leaders attended the Food Summit, where the First Lady of Virginia, Dorothy McAuliffe, gave the keynote address. At the conclusion of the Food Summit, a resolution was presented encouraging all in attendance to continue working to end food insecurity on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. More than 20 people in attendance registered for the action-based work group under the Eastern Shore Healthy Communities coalition, agreeing to continue to work on ending food insecurity in our community.

“It’s a shame to think that anybody who lives in a place where we grow fruits and vegetables by the acre and we can catch lean protein from the sea by the nautical mile that anybody should be hungry here on the Eastern Shore.” - Patti Kiger, Executive Director, Eastern Shore Healthy Communities

Sustainable Success

The Eastern Shore Healthy Communities coalition is dedicated to ending food insecurity on Virginia’s Eastern Shore. A work group has been created to sustain the results of the Food Summit. The initial goal was to recruit six new members to join the work group; three times as many people signed up, acknowledging that food insecurity in our community is unacceptable, and fixable.

“Success Stories” http://nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccessstories/

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“We cannot expect our children to be hungry for knowledge if they are just plain hungry.” – Dorothy McAuliffe, First Lady of Virginia