New Mexico Pueblo WIC Helps Tribes Work Together to "Get Fresh - Get Healthy"

Gail Crane

Summary
Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos (FSIP) is bringing together south and central Sandoval County Pueblos and local businesses to identify and implement increased availability of healthy fresh foods in the community. With very few full service grocery stores in the area and average travel time upwards of 45 minutes to these stores, residents rely on small local convenience stores for day to day food. FSIP is leading the initiative to make quality fresh produce available in the smaller stores in ways that enhance economic viability of these businesses.

Challenge
Across America, unhealthy eating is a leading cause of chronic health issues including overweight/obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, heart disease. Across America, access to healthy foods varies significantly depending on where a person lives. Within Sandoval County NM studies show high levels of food insecurity, lack of access to food sources and lack of high quality fruits and vegetables within most stores. The number of grocery stores of any kind in Sandoval County is approximately half that of the US average. Most of the population lives in remote areas, with access to a full service grocery store requiring a 45 to 60 mile round trip. Convenience stores, small general stores, and non-chain small format stores are relied upon for day-to-day food needs. The challenges to small stores are limited space for storing and displaying fresh produce, limited purchasing power, lack of sophisticated inventory and ordering systems, and inability to find consistent suppliers.

Solution
Within southern and central Sandoval County, NM Five Sandoval Indian Pueblos (FSIP) is a consortium providing health, welfare and employment services to approximately 8200 members of 5 Indian Pueblos, and members of the surrounding community when possible. While each of the individual Pueblos provides health services through tribal health centers and community activities, FSIP is uniquely positioned to help the pueblos work together sharing ideas and resources to improve the health of all residents of the area. In this new cooperative spirit community members, local grocers and C-stores, and local suppliers have found ways to provide access to quality produce that make good business sense.

Your Involvement is Key
The Convenience stores are part of our local community. In order for them to support the community through healthy food options, the community members must be willing to support the stores by purchasing the healthy foods and keeping in contact with the stores about what they like and don't like and new foods they would like to try. And, in small communities, working together by volunteering to help with upgrades and redesign of the stores will help keep the costs of enhancements down.
Results

The 5 pueblos, community members and local businesses are collaborating to share concerns, ideas and resources. The stores are working with a local organic food not for profit agency to provide flat rate boxes of fresh produce that can be pre-ordered and delivered to a central location on each pueblo for pick up by members. Where possible, deliveries will be made to the closest convenience store. Additionally, since FSIP WIC uses hard copy “checks” with specific foods documented, they are a way for WIC beneficiaries to pre-order their allowed foods to be boxed by the WIC stores for pick up. And stores are planning to cooperate in bulk ordering from the local organic foods supplier to take advantage of better pricing and variety of foods. Having loose produce available when picking up orders will prompt spontaneous add-on purchases of healthy foods, and increase store sales.

Sustainable Success

Planned and ongoing activities include the following:

- Work with existing stores to redesign and expand in-store display units
- Train stores on better ways to store and display produce to extend shelf-life, and use of post-mature foods for cooking and preparing of healthy take out foods and drinks.
- Facilitate cooperation among stores for bulk ordering of produce
- Work with local growers (not for profit organic grocer and local tribal farms and greenhouses) to stock stores on a just-in-time schedule
- Provide food tastings and cooking classes to encourage the community to include new, healthy foods in their diet.

Contact

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Success Stories

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