Camden, New Jersey: Improving Community Health One Bite at a Time

by: Yvette Alvarez

SUMMARY
The Camden Partnerships for Healthy Women and Children (CPHMC) coalition teamed up with a local soup kitchen and two grocery stores to showcase residents that recommended USDA foods can be healthy and flavorful by hosting a community food demonstration. “Invest in your health & gain some wealth” is the slogan we developed to entice customers into trying new foods and recipes. The food demonstration will highlight meals from “Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Homes” cookbook which are easy and simple for families to prepare.

CHALLENGE
To better understand the healthy buying habits of customers at four WIC approved locations (grocery and corner store) we surveyed patrons as they exited the store. When asked, “What would help you and your family eat healthier” an overwhelming 59% said recipes using healthy foods and 30% said information on choosing healthier options-an unexpected response. Since Camden does not have one full-service supermarket within the city limits and residents must rely on corner stores or grocery stores, with fewer options, we thought transportation would have been the limiting factor.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY
Working with different organizations in Camden allows us to better understand what the residents in the community are looking for. We enjoyed the feedback we received from WIC clients and the customers we surveyed for this project. The healthy food demonstration is just one of way of saying, “we heard you and we’d like to help.”

You too can help your community, family and friends have healthier and happier lives. Contact WIC to join the CPHMC coalition or sponsor an event.

“Input from clients and the community is key for creating successful programs. I often try to remind others that ‘One of the deep secrets of life is that all that is really worth the doing is what we do for others - Lewis Carrol.’”

- Yvette Alvarez

Success Stories
http://nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccessstories/
SOLUTION

Residents often travel to multiple stores to purchase groceries especially for fresh fruits and vegetables. Partnering with two local stores, Cousin’s Supermarket and Price-Rite, provided the ideal venue for a healthy food demonstration. Each store donated resources and one of our other coalition members, Cathedral Kitchen, agreed to prepare and present the food. Recipes from the USDA website were selected because they were simple to understand, culturally appropriate, and called for ingredients available in most homes.

SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS

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Successful outcomes of CPHMC’s initiative rely on collaborative efforts from the community and coalition members. The WIC clinic and our partners work, interact and serve the same population and we recognize working in a silo can only add to the barriers Camden residents face. Building relationships and achieving our objective for improving access to healthy foods and beverages, although a slow process can make an impact in our community. We will encourage the coalition to continue to work together and share information.

RESULTS

Our first food demonstration at Cousin’s Supermarket is scheduled for late October 2015 and finalizing dates for the next one at Price-Rite. All the players involved have been overwhelmingly supportive and generous and we are all looking forward to the feedback we receive from participants.

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Success Stories
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