

The H.A.N.D.S. on Approach to Tackling Nutrition through Environmental Changes and Community Partnerships.

Health Access and Nutrition Development Services | Mount Rogers Health District | Galax, VA

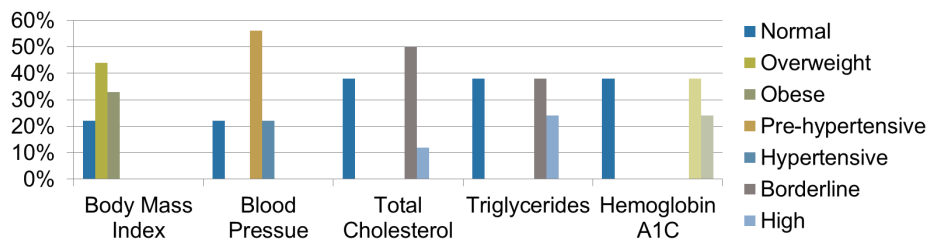
Project Overview:

The Mount Rogers Health District (MRHD), in Southwest Virginia, is one of 17 local WIC agencies across the nation to be a part of the Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) project. MRHD used a multisector approach to address nutrition disparities in rural communities through the Health Access and Nutrition Development Services (H.A.N.D.S.) task force, a subgroup to the Twin County Prevention Coalition in Galax, VA. The H.A.N.D.S. task force consists of a diverse group of collaborators with various backgrounds and expertise. In building capacity, MRHD sought to establish a group of key stakeholders that would stand as a representation of the community at large and resources available. During the 15-month project period, the group used a hands on approach to effectively identify the needs of the community, assess and strengthen existing resources, initiate agency partnerships/collaborations, and implement a comprehensive plan that addressed nutrition disparities and resource gaps in areas of need. H.A.N.D.S. multifaceted approach seeks to implement system and environmental changes that increase availability and awareness of healthy food options, while creating an atmosphere that promotes positive lifestyle choices.

H.A.N.D.S. on Convenience: a healthy corner store pilot initiative that increases the availability of fresh produce and healthy snack options in rural convenience stores by increasing the stores' capacity to sell healthy options, providing nutrition education and in-store training/technical assistance that makes selling healthy options profitable.

Outcomes:

- Healthy Corner Store Pilot Business Plan produced in partnership with the Office of Economic Development, Virginia Tech.
- 2 stores increased their capacity to sell and market healthy options. Partnerships established between store owners, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents, local growers, and fresh food distributors in the region.
- Collaborations formed with extension agents, Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, and business experts to provide in-store training and technical assistance to make healthy changes profitable and sustainable long term.
- Partnered with Mount Rogers Health District's Wellness Team to provide health screenings to store owners and their employees. Of the 9 people tested, 75% had low Vitamin D levels, 3 had osteopenia, 2 men over 40 years old were referred to their physicians for high PSA levels, and 2 had abnormal thyroid levels. 6 out of 9 of the participants received referrals to the doctor for various medical reasons. Wellness screenings are the first of three offered to those enrolled in the Healthy Corner Store Network.

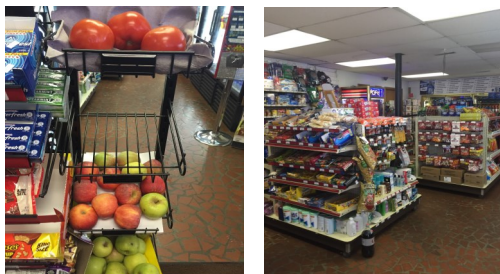


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Before:



After:



H.A.N.D.S. on Breastfeeding: an initiative that focuses on improving breastfeeding initiation and duration rates through system and environmental changes that support women where they work, play, and live.

Outcomes:

- 4 lactation rooms sponsored by Twin County Prevention Coalition and Twin County Regional Hospital implemented in the local pediatric office and three school systems.
- 4 festivals sponsored mobile breastfeeding stations potentially reaching over 3,000 women of childbearing age during the 3 months offered. Air conditioned mobile units were donated by Jeff Johnson RV Dealership and MRHD Wellness Team.
- 15 agencies registered for the Building the Business Case for Breastfeeding training, held in partnership with the Twin County Prevention Coalition.
- Over 25 health professionals registered for the Certified Lactation Consultant Training held in partnership with the



H.A.N.D.S. on Farmers' Markets: an initiative that improves access and increases awareness of fresh locally grown foods in the Twin Counties.

Outcomes:

- Collaborated with VA Tech OED, Hillsville Town Manager, local extension agents, and farmers' market managers to develop a feasibility study of the regions farmers' markets, best practices, and funding resources to strengthen farmers' markets in the area.
- 3 Market Managers attended the Farmers Market Manager meeting to discuss best practices and ways to strengthen market.
- 6 local growers trained in Food Safety Best Practices for Market Growers, offered through Virginia Cooperative Extension.
- Linked farmers' market managers with community partners to establish clinical linkages and nutrition programming at the market.
- Collaborated with WIC and social services to disseminate targeted outreach and direct marketing to populations less likely to frequent market.

H.A.N.D.S. on Cooking Matters at the Store: provides community partners with the training and tools needed to equip those they serve with nutrition education and smart shopping skills to make healthier choices at the grocery store.

Outcomes:

- 6 community organizations trained in the Cooking Matters at the Store curriculum, with the potential to reach approximately 71,505 people.