K-HIP! A Community Initiative to Increase Healthy Options

by: Tatjana Bicanin

SUMMARY

K-HIP, the Kenosha Healthy Improvement Project is taking the lead on making healthy living easier in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The Kenosha WIC Clinic, operated by the Racine/Kenosha Community Action Agency, was among the 15 local WIC agencies selected for the second cohort of Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) grants. In 2016, our project launched K-HIP to coordinate the efforts and engage community partners in chronic disease prevention and health promotion. Grocery stores and local farmers are engaging in the community conversations to promote and highlight healthy foods.

CHALLENGE

Humans are creatures of habit. As creatures, we have needs. We need to eat, and so we eat. Habits help us through our day. Thus we are loyal to our product brands and we shop at the neighborhood grocery store because we like the familiarity. We know as a nation kid’s diets are too low in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and too high in sodium, saturated fats, and added sugars. Adult diets aren’t much better. The dominant health and nutritional risks for the Kenosha WIC participants are obesity and inadequate diet. Nearly one in three WIC children between the ages of 2 and 5 are classified as overweight or obese. Prior to becoming pregnant, 60% of WIC women are overweight or obese, and after giving birth, that percentage increases to 80%. K-HIP has established two work-groups to target poor nutrition and increase the access to healthier food options.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

K-HIP is supporting the local community in implementing strategies that address poor nutrition and lack of access to opportunities for chronic disease prevention, risk reduction and management through community and clinical linkages. We ask you to contemplate the following questions as you think about your role within the community: Why does this matter to me? Whose life will get better because we are here? Who isn’t thriving in terms of their health?

"I appreciate the opportunity to participate in K-HIP and share my ideas on how to promote our local farmer markets. Access to local, fresh produce should be made available to all. I’m happy to be a new WIC Vendor!" – The Funkin Farm

- Stephanie Funk of the Funk Farm
K-HIP is taking the lead on coordinating the workgroup activities which will bring about Policy, System and/or Environmental changes. Workgroup #1 along with several of the local grocery store directors are excited to partner with our Registered Dietitians at the WIC Clinic and Nutrition Educators at University of Wisconsin–Extension to think of new ways to promote healthy foods.

Currently, the four workgroups (grocery store, farmer market, non-pharmaceutical prescription pad and communication/outreach) are making progress on the activities outlined in the Community Action Plan. Community partners are committed to their action items and actively contribute in both the workgroups and coalition, and willingly solicit additional resources as needed. Possibilities abound for new on-site and in-store placement and promotion strategies for healthy foods at grocery stores, and local farmers’ markets are increasing the number of farmers who accept WIC FMNP checks. The enthusiasm and commitment for all those involved in the project will be a win-win for the local community.

To sustain these efforts, relationships will be of importance. The agency has a long history of actively working on food security issues in collaboration with other nonprofits, government agencies, faith-based communities, and educational institutions. Community partners who have committed to K-HIP include: UW–Extension; Kenosha County Division of Health; Kenosha Community Health Center; Kenosha Common Markets; CUSH (Congregations United to Serve Humanity); Prevention Services Network, Gateway Technical College, Kenosha YMCA, Kenosha County ADRC, Kenosha Unified School District, United Way of Kenosha County and United Hospital System. Their willingness to work together to build a Culture of Health will be a win-win for the local community.

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