Southeast Health District & Meadows Regional Medical Center Partner for Health

David Brown

Summary
A grant recipient of the Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers & Children grant, The Southeast Health District, formed the group Mommy & Me, Healthy as Can Be! (M&M!) to make being healthy an easy task in Tattnall, Ga. M&M! partnered with Meadows Regional Medical Center who shares the vision to accomplish this by making Tattnall County a breastfeeding friendly community. This relationship has spawned a wide-range of businesses & organizations who not only publicly promote & welcome breastfeeding but also stand to support the health of women & children.

Challenge
Preventing chronic disease is a challenging task in rural America. Easy commutes? An abundance of healthcare resources? Not here. Located in the Southeast pocket of Georgia, Tattnall County could be the poster child for health adversity in rural USA. One-third of Tattnall’s residents live in poverty, a statistic that doubles the national average. Poverty is a key driver of health status so it is no surprise that rates of obesity, infant mortality, & low birth-weight babies all exceed national levels. Breastfeeding, an act that has many preventative benefits to child & mother, has abismally low rates in this area as well. In 2014, only 22% of Tattnall mothers breastfed for 6 months compared to 49% Nation-wide. Many barriers contribute to these low rates including poverty & the need to return to work post-labor, lack of work-place policies, and the social stigma of public breastfeeding.

Solution
Building strong partnerships in rural areas is key to maximizing impact. The first meeting for Mommy & Me, Healthy as Can Be! spawned a partnership that has formed the foundation for a systems driven approach to prevent chronic disease in mothers & children. Meadows Regional Medical Center (MRMC), located in Vidalia, Ga is the main source of medical care for Tattnall County residents. Long commutes to this hospital is a great barrier to care for its patients. This partnership has fulfilled the desire of both groups to bring options to the community & create a landscape where being healthy is the norm. Making our area breastfeeding friendly, designing community gardens, & connecting healthcare resources has enabled our community to get on track to maximize its health.

Your Involvement is Key
Breastfeeding has a wealth of benefits not only for babies but for mothers too. Moms should feel welcomed wherever they desire to feed their babies. If you are a business who would like to become breastfeeding friendly or if you are interested in having discussions on the topic please reach out!
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Results

The partnership between Mommy & Me, Healthy as Can Be! and Meadows Regional Medical Center has blossomed over a short period of time. Through hard work in the community, over 20 business have become breastfeeding friendly or have adopted policies to enable breastfeeding mothers to feed in peace. This union between public health & private medicine also filled a gap between the local health department (WIC) & MRMC Women's Health. Before our partnership, communication between the two was absent and a referral system was non-existent. Women & children are no longer falling through the "cracks" & are receiving the appropriate care they deserve. Organizational relationship building has been the foundation for our success, cementing a bond that will continue to serve the community.

Sustainable Success

Our goal is to have a lasting impact on the community through sustained activities. When a business agrees to become breastfeeding friendly or adopt policies to support nursing customers & employees, those changes last with the business. Additionally word of mouth has been powerful as businesses have reached out to our program because of the positive impact other businesses have seen. Our partner, Meadows Regional Medical Center, is equally vested in supporting breastfeeding mothers in the community and will continue spread support for our cause.

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Success Stories
http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/