Store Tours, Healthy Eating on a Budget
Mandeville and Covington LA

Sandy Matthews

Summary
The goal is to create access to healthy foods in our community.
Cooking Matters at the Store Tours allows participants to identify what foods are healthy as well as how to shop on a budget.

WIC participants enjoy having the opportunity to learn in a grocery environment vs a classroom setting.

Participants learn how to use their cell phone calculator to find unit pricing per ounce to help in comparing prices. HOW to look for whole grains, hidden sugars, and the pros and cons of buying fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables!

Challenge
Food insecurity is defined as a household-level of economic and social conditions of limited or uncertain access to adequate foods.
One may think that food insecurity does not exists here in America, but 1 out of 5 children are at risk of hunger as reported by Share Our Strengths Campaign. The CDC reports a 33.1% adult obesity rate in the state of Louisiana. As reported by Community Commons 80% of adults not eating the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables daily. These numbers are important in understanding what public health issues impact our local communities at risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity.

Solution
A non profit organization, Cooking Matters provided training to staff members and volunteers that included education on how to purchase healthy and affordable foods. Store tours are offered FREE to the public with a focus on WIC participants. The local community has helped promote this activity to the public, such as local newspapers, radio and television stations, and social media.
Specific steps taken to carry out this initiative includes partnering with local grocery stores such as Walmart, Winn-Dixie and Rouses Supermarkets.

Your Involvement is Key
Your participation in this initiative takes little effort, Cooking Matters implements the program and provides the training and materials. No previous skills or knowledge nutrition knowledge needed. Simply apply for the Share Our Strengths cooking Matters Grant and once awarded, register online for a user name and password. Materials arrive within a few days. Start partnering with local grocery store managers and local organizations to start signing up community members up for store tours!
Results

The initiative encourages shoppers to make healthier food choices and utilize unit pricing to purchase more with their money. Four grocery stores agreed to participate. Eight store tours were conducted including 100 tour participants. As of now, 15 Pop Up Store tours have been conducted at the WIC clinic including 275 participants. At the close of each tour all participants complete a survey provided by Cooking Matters. The overall consensus is positive with several written affirmations that learning about hidden sugars, nutrition label reading and knowing how to look for whole grains and equate unit pricing to reduce spending is the most notable.

“When asked what new ideas learned on the tour for saving money or buying healthier food, a participant replied, “that whole breads must say WHOLE or it could potentially be much less healthy than thought.””

- Joey Skinner

Sustainable Success

Training is available to store employees at Rouses and Neighborhood Walmart Supermarkets. Currently, 10 employees have successfully completed training including store managers, assistant managers, store clerks, and produce managers.
Future employee training will be available bimonthly.
The next steps will be to include at least two more stores, and conduct monthly tours.

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