2013-15 Manatee County CHIP: A Regional Approach to Community Engagement And Healthy Food Access in Underserved Communities

Presented to the Manatee Healthcare Alliance by Megan Jourdan and Erin Laird on October 1, 2015
USDA – Designated Food Desert Census Tracts in Manatee and Sarasota Counties

Low Income and Low Access at 1 and 10 miles
Percent of adults who live within ½ mile of a healthy food retailer

- Manatee: 25%
- Sarasota: 27%
Percent of adults who eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day

Manatee: 17%

Sarasota: 18%
Percent of adults who are overweight or obese

Manatee: 62%

Sarasota: 58%
Community Based Participatory Research

Engage Residents

- Assets
- Barriers
- Solutions
How did we engage residents?
Focus group at Samoset Elementary
What did the community tell us?
Themes

Perceived Barriers
- Cost
- Availability
- Lack of knowledge

Desired Solutions
- Growing Food
- Affordable fresh options closer to home
- Classes
We asked:

What, in your community, makes it difficult to eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables?
Residents told us:

“Well for one thing, out here there aren’t any stores. So we can’t get any fresh stuff.”

“In this community, there’s not really stores, there are ‘food stores,’ or whatever but it’s just like going to a gas station.”

“I think sometimes it’s just the transportation.”
“We have to buy what we can afford, not what we like to get.”

“A lot of people don’t get the essentials that they need, because food is so expensive.”

“When you’re low income, it’s hard to go to the grocery store and pick out a meal that’s healthy and also cheap.”

“Eating healthy is expensive.”
We asked:

Imagine that you have the opportunity to help your community have an easier time getting the types of food they want and need. What would you do?
Residents told us:

“If a stand from a local farm came a couple times a week, that’d be neat.”

“Well, we’d have to start a garden.”

“Vegetable delivery service.”

“Some classes, with maybe some ideas on healthier options we could cook.”
Next, we deployed a randomized door-to-door survey to delve deeper into what residents were telling us.
Survey Methodology

*Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER)*

- Choose census tracts
- Randomly select 30 census blocks
- Survey seven homes
- Complete 168-210 surveys
Through the survey, we identified 14 Manatee residents and 20 Sarasota residents who would like to serve as community conduits for healthy food information.

Additionally, 70 Manatee residents and 38 Sarasota residents would like to participate in future planning meetings.
Survey Says...

Food desert residents perceive fruits and vegetables as being expensive.
What would make it easier to get fruits and vegetables?

If fruits and vegetables were cheaper.

- **Manatee**: 73% said yes
- **Sarasota**: 69% said yes
Survey Says...

Food desert residents perceive stores as being far away.
What would make it easier to get fruits and vegetables?

If fruits and vegetables were sold closer to your home?

- Manatee: 40%
- Sarasota: 47%
Survey Says...

Food desert residents want fresh, affordable options, close to their homes.
Respondents would shop at farm stands in their neighborhoods.

Manatee: 58%
Sarasota: 76%
When asked about farm stands, respondents replied:

“It has to be fresh.”

“I will shop there if it is not expensive.”

“I would be more likely to go if I could also get other things, like milk and eggs.”
Survey Says…

Food desert residents want places in their neighborhoods where they can grow their own food.
Respondents want to grow their own food.

- **Manatee County**: 53%
- **Sarasota County**: 48%
Respondents feel that classes on vegetable gardening would help them grow their own food.

- 54% in Manatee County
- 33% in Sarasota County
Respondents would like community fruit trees in their neighborhoods.

- 60% in Manatee County
- 55% in Sarasota County
Survey Says...

Food desert residents want educational opportunities
The top 4 topics respondents expressed interest in:

- Vegetable Gardening: 53% Manatee, 33% Sarasota
- Stretching Your Dollar: 41% Manatee, 42% Sarasota
- Cooking Fruits & Veggies: 37% Manatee, 38% Sarasota
- Healthy Eating & Nutrition: 35% Manatee, 36% Sarasota
Residents of Manatee are more likely to attend classes that:

- Are held in their neighborhood: 60%
- Are shorter than an hour: 60%
- Provide Childcare: 40%
- Provide Dinner: 38%
- Provide Transportation: 26%
Residents of Sarasota are more likely to attend classes that:

- Are held in their neighborhood: 60%
- Are shorter than an hour: 44%
- Provide Childcare: 33%
- Provide Dinner: 21%
- Provide Transportation: 19%
Survey Says...

Food desert residents are using emergency food assistance resources.
In both counties, 25% of respondents reported using emergency food resources in the last 12 months.
How do you make it work during the times when you don’t have enough food?

**Manatee**
- Eat what I have
- Eat with friends/family
- Eat less

**Sarasota**
- Stretch budget
- Food Pantry
- Eat cheaper food

*Top 3 answers from each county*
“Look at that, that’s sad right there. That’s what my fridge and cabinet always look like. I don’t have a car, so I gotta walk to the store. I would go to a pantry, but I can’t get there. I do have a lot of peanut butter. People are always giving me peanut butter. Sometimes I just eat it with a spoon for dinner.”
Recorded personal narratives
Understanding life in a food desert

Stories from the Food Desert

Interviews by New College of Florida Students

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUO3h3Em6OY
Project recognition:

• Invited by National Environmental Health Association to provide a panel presentation on community engagement strategies at annual conference

• Designated model pilot project for National Institute for Children’s Health Quality’s Social Determinants of Health initiative

• Will be featured on National Association of City and County Health Officials’ webinar to develop national public health recommendations for healthy food access policies and activities
Current Implementation Initiatives:

- Partnering with Realize Bradenton to implement EBT at the Downtown Bradenton Farmers’ Market
- Partnering with Geraldson Farms to implement USDA grant received to develop Mobile Market to serve food desert neighborhoods
- Partnering with IFAS Sarasota, IFAS Manatee, and Manatee River Garden Club to develop Community Gardens
- Kicked off the Manasota Food Action Council
Manasota Food Action Council
Thank you!
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