

Session #4: The Good Food Charter in Rural Michigan

- Good Food Charter goals for MI's food system:
 - Improve availability of healthy food
 - Promote healthy diets
 - Increase nutrition program participation
 - Promote local food marketing
- Lake City, MI demographics
 - Population: 11,000 - about 20 people per square mile
 - Most residents make \$16K/year or less
 - Considered "food desert"
 - County has one of the highest poverty rates in state
 - 90% of kids under 5 are WIC recipients
 - High need area, space between residences poses a challenge
- Grant/RFP written in 2013 to address the problem
 - Partnered with national organizations, grant from CDC
 - Community-driven plan to reduce chronic disease, decrease recurrence of two main issues: poor nutrition and lack of access to food.
 - Aimed for educational component
- Began labeling nutritious foods in grocery stores, local restaurants
 - Example: Houseman's grocery store in Baldwin
 - Selected WIC-applicable foods
 - Labels included health benefits of each food (ex: vitamin content, etc.)
 - Example: Iron's Cafe
 - Used USDA guidelines - factored in caloric, salt, fat content, etc.
 - Challenging because restaurants did not want to share their recipes or alter their menus
 - Healthy options exist, people just don't order them - more education to be done
 - Labelling in local self-choice food pantries
- Farmer's market began selling produce at local farmer's market to give patients proximity to healthy food.
- Freddie Rosado, chair of local food policy council
 - Began farming as a way to sustain his family post-2008 recession
 - Challenges with the work in Lake County:
 - Not good Internet connection, hard to disseminate information
 - MSU Extension benefits were out of the way
- 2016 Food Policy Council Projects
 - Expand Bread of Life Pantry, transition to self-choice model

- Initial idea was to utilize the labelling program, but had \$ to expand
 - Got Voices For Food \$15K mini grant
- Got new glassfront coolers
- Work with local meat processor who does youth program to process their meats during hunting season (Sportsmen Against Hunger)
- Free Build-A-Box Garden
 - Each tiny garden had produce transplants that could be grown at home (beans, radishes, tomatoes and peppers)
 - Distributed 300 boxes at 3 local events
 - Partnered with faith-based community - had events at churches, church leaders blessed the plants
 - Inspired them to start church gardens
- Training classes in local high school
 - Hands-on cooking classes
 - Students received ServSafe certification to use for future jobs
 - Restored kitchen at school
 - Hosted “Sharktank”-like simulation
- Still working on farmer’s market feasibility study
 - Just completed results, currently meeting with community stakeholders
- In progress: Freddie took caning class, got grant to purchase canning equipment. Wants to start lending library for the community.
- Formed co-op with Amish farmers - Freddie said it was a “logistical nightmare”
- Considering pursuing 501(c)3 status
- Challenges
 - Lack of cultural competency
 - Scattered population
 - Food pantries isolated from each other
 - Solved problem, now in communication so food does not get wasted.
 - Many people don’t drive

Questions

Q: What are some ways to help people get to food pantries if transportation is an issue?

A: Some health departments give transportation tokens to pantries. Some local foundations provide grants to use this system. Perhaps encourage carpooling, local entrepreneurs to charge discount rates to transport people.

Q: What are some suggestions for neutral locations to have roundtable meetings/discussions about the food system with community stakeholders?

A: Schools, occasionally churches depending on the crowd, DHHS sometimes rents out rooms, libraries.