

Plan4Health: The F.R.E.S.H. Project

SUMMARY

Plan4Health connects communities across the country, funding work at the intersection of planning and public health. Anchored by American Planning Association (APA) chapters and American Public Health Association (APHA) affiliates, Plan4Health supports creative partnerships to build sustainable, cross-sector coalitions. The Food-Resources-Education-Security-Health Project (F.R.E.S.H.) aims to work with County government, Native American Tribes and community organizations in east central Wisconsin to improve access to local, fresh food.



CHALLENGE

The Menominee and Shawano area has a combined population of 46,000, with mostly Caucasian and Native American residents. These communities rank poorly in health outcomes, with Menominee and Shawano Counties ranking 72nd and 47th out of 72 counties, respectively. Unemployment is high and median incomes are below the state average; 11.5 percent to 31.4 percent of residents are living in poverty. Menominee County's childhood

poverty rate is 59 percent. Diabetes and coronary heart disease rates are elevated, and obesity rates in both counties are higher than state and national averages. Significant portions of both counties are considered food deserts. Only three Shawano County municipalities have full service grocery stores and Menominee County has only one. Agriculture accounts for a large percentage of economic activity, but only 95 of the 1,200 farms in the area sell local products directly to customers.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

If you would like to join the movement for a more sustainable and accessible food system in our region, contact the F.R.E.S.H. Project at the email or phone number listed below. To learn more, check out the Project's website (www.plan4health.us), where you can also find out information about all the coalitions participating in Plan4Health. Join the national conversation at the intersection of planning and public health on social media by using and following #plan4health.

"It's about a healthier lifestyle for all of us regardless of what color we are."

*- Lawrence L. Walker, JR.,
F.R.E.S.H. Project Core Team
Member, Community Health
Representative, Ho-Chunk
Nation*

SOLUTION

The F.R.E.S.H. Project will build capacity to improve access to healthy food by creating a coalition of planning and public health professionals, University of Wisconsin Extension staff, social service agency representatives, people working in the local food system, and community activists. Data will be gathered through surveys and focus groups to analyze barriers to access, understand consumer behaviors, and inform future decision. Ultimately, this project will lead to an enhanced local food system where fresh produce is more readily accessible throughout these communities, making healthier food choices easier and improving overall health outcomes.

RESULTS

With the survey nearing completion, the coalition has already received over 500 responses from the communities, providing the F.R. E.S.H. Project with a solid base of information to better understand the challenges people face. Coalition members have shared the survey through door-to-door visits, WIC Clinics, and food pantries; events such as community dinners, back-to-school gatherings, farmer's market, and the county fair; and newspapers, radio spots, shopper guides, school newsletters, church bulletins and social media. All these avenues have given the project wide exposure throughout the communities and helped educate the public about both the problem of food insecurity and the work of the project. This outreach has resulted in a higher number of completed surveys than expected and in community connections that will support the project's future efforts.

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