



Drink Up!:

Inyo's Community Transformation Success Story

Intervention Summary (PSE)

"Drink Up!" That's what Team Inyo's slogan was in 2015, as announced in the Inyo Register in May upon the installation of the first Team Inyo bottle filling water station in Inyo County.

Team Inyo for Healthy Kids is Inyo County's collaborative of local agencies and organizations working together to reduce childhood obesity. Inyo SNAP-Ed staff facilitates Team Inyo meetings and activities. This year Team Inyo decided to focus all of its efforts on changing at least one environmental factor and with help from SNAP-Ed's Inland Desert Training and Resource Center, moved from being more of a relationship-building and educational collaborative to a true coalition.

Members voted to work to improve water access for Inyo County children, recognizing that Inyo child overweight and obesity rates are high and on the rise¹² and that improving the accessibility of clean, free drinking water in schools and communities is a recommended strategy to prevent obesity.³⁴ This focus is in line with previous Team Inyo work to promote Rethink Your Drink and extends Inyo SNAP-Ed's efforts to increase physical activity through summertime hikes in local Inyo areas.

¹ California Department of Education, Statewide Assessment Division. (2012-13). California Physical Fitness Report: Summary of Results. Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/pf/pftresults.asp>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (July 24, 2009). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: Obesity Prevalence Among Low-Income, Preschool-Aged Children-United States, 1998-2008*. Retrieved from <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>.

³ Upstream Public Health. (June 2012). *Improving Student Access to Tap Water for Better Health*.

⁴ Muckelbauer et al. (April 2009). Promotion and Provision of Drinking Water in Schools for Overweight Prevention: Randomized, Controlled Cluster Trial. *PEDIATRICS*, 123(4).

While increasing physical activity is a key obesity prevention strategy, access to free water is needed when encouraging residents to be more active. The County of Inyo is known for high temperatures during the summer months, and Team Inyo seized the opportunity to install the first public water station within the City of Bishop during a retrofit of the downtown area. Through key partnerships with Toiyabe Indian Health Project Community Wellness Program and the City of Bishop Public Works Department, the water station was installed in Talmadge Park, a highly accessible area to the public, near a high school, library, and local businesses, providing almost 4,000 community members access to fresh drinking water.⁵ The three-tier water station cost \$7,000. This is a small investment in a vital community resource.

The Terra Cotta-colored water station allows residents to refill water bottles, drink from a fountain, or fill the dog bowl at ground level for their thirsty pooches. Sponsored by Team Inyo for Healthy Kids, this is the first step in a long-term campaign to increase water access, making it easy for children and their families to choose water rather than sugary sports drinks and sodas, which account for between 250 to 650 extra calories a day in American diets.

Team Inyo wants to create an environment where families in our communities can easily find free water within easy reach of their high traffic areas. Water stations have been proven to increase hydration for years now in the cities, along the streets, or within the buildings where they are installed. And an added bonus is the fact that they reduce disposable water bottle usage, benefitting the environment, too.

Talmadge Park is not only centrally located on Bishop's Main Street, near high traffic points like a grocery store and movie theatre, but is also on one of the main footpaths traveled by kids walking from Bishop Union High School or residents traveling from the library to access local businesses in town.

As the water access campaign continues, Team Inyo will be reaching out to residents in Big Pine, Independence, Lone Pine, and in many Tribal communities to get feedback for more areas that could benefit from water stations.

Team Inyo is hoping that their water access project will be another way for locals to reclaim what has long been a prized and contested local commodity, creating a deeper appreciation for something that is free, natural, and unique to our communities in the Eastern Sierra.

⁵ Inyo County Planning Department. (May 2011). *Census 2010 Demographic Report*.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Team Inyo faced minor barriers and challenges in the endeavor of placing a water station in Bishop. The group chose the objective in part because it was recommended as timely, relatively simple, and doable. When Brown Miller Communications (contracted by Inland Desert TRC) assisted Team Inyo in identifying a project and moving forward with an action plan, they helped Team Inyo see the benefit of choosing an objective that would be an easy first environmental change for the community and would inspire confidence and encourage cohesion among Team Inyo members around a common, action-oriented goal.

Ongoing challenges Team Inyo experiences are limited time and resources. Choosing an easy first sustainable change goal assisted Team Inyo in overcoming the challenge of limited staff time, as members were more likely to spend time contributing to the goal outside of meetings and were willing to meet more often than once per quarter. Team Inyo members signed up to help with action items such as writing a press release, meeting with key leaders, researching water stations, creating print advertisements, creating a sign for the water station, etc., when previously members had not eagerly volunteered for such assignments.

Limited resources are a challenge that Team Inyo will continue to face as it seeks to place future water stations in underserved areas. Funding and installing the first water station in Bishop was the result of serendipitous timing and a relatively easy match of Toiyabe Community Wellness Program funds and City of Bishop Public Works manpower to install and maintain the fountain as part of regular duties in perpetuity. Funding the water station was possible due to the enthusiasm of the Community Wellness Program Project Director and the Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) grant that is short-term in length and will not necessarily be available for future projects. Installing the water station was possible due to the interest of the City Planner in our project and the unique opportunity to include a water station as part of the Warren Street Project implementation in downtown Bishop during the spring of 2015. Public Works contractors were already tearing up concrete and revamping Talmadge Park at the corner of Main Street and Academy, and Team Inyo jumped in at the right time.

One barrier we found was that the City of Bishop was not willing to pay for the water station without going through a lengthy process, but was willing to provide installation and maintenance.

Another minor barrier was that we ran short on time in sending our final water station choice to the City Planner and due to a miscommunication, he used the engineering installation plans for a prior choice instead of our final choice of a freeze-resistant water station model. In the end, the City could only install a non-freeze-resistant model and will have to shut off the water station during the coldest months of the year.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Over the next five years, Team Inyo plans to engage school age children in its water station projects to understand the needs of the different communities and schools and to help promote Inyo's great-tasting drinking water among students. Team Inyo's long-term vision is that everyone in Inyo County will have a water station within 5-minute walking distance of their daily activities. SNAP-Ed staff will provide administrative and organizational support to Team Inyo as the collaborative expands its water station initiative to reach underserved areas of the county.

To encourage sustainability of the projects, Team Inyo will partner with agencies and involve community members to secure funding, installation, and ongoing maintenance of the water stations. Ideas include involving Youth Coalition members and other high school or middle school students in surveying the needs of the community and presenting that information to local groups capable of funding a water station, such as Chamber of Commerce, civic clubs, local business, and others.

Contact information about this Narrative

Local Health Department Grant Name: Inyo County Health & Human Services

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Author's Name: April Eagan

Phone: 760-872-0900

Email: aeagan@inyocounty.us

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