



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story and Lessons Learned

Title

Home Garden Opportunity Center Begins Community Garden within Low-Income Area of Hanford

Intervention Summary

The Home Garden area is a small census-designated area of low-income residents, located in south Hanford of Kings County. The area is plagued with poverty, crime, and lack of infrastructure. There are minimal businesses and no grocery stores; a few convenience stores offer the area's population some access to goods, but lack healthy options. No sidewalks are present on the ever-busy roads that are afflicted with speedy travelers and agricultural vehicles, and street lights aren't extant. For these reasons, Kings Community Action Organization (KCAO) chose the Home Garden area as one of its four neighborhoods for the Cx3 project so that policies, systems, and environmental work could begin to take its shape in the area. Due to the area lacking grocery stores, and thus healthier food options for the residents, the KCAO SNAP-Ed team decided to begin a community garden. The SNAP-Ed team was lucky in that a garden had once existed years ago at the Home Garden Opportunity Center so much of the foundations of a garden had been established, including irrigation and beds.

Plans are to engage the community, from preschoolers to parents, in the efforts and afford them the benefits of garden-based nutrition education and support them in their desires to be part of the garden, whether it be volunteering or planting their own items. The team has reached out to and began a partnership with an after school program in the area that will begin visiting the garden in October 2015, along with two Head Start Centers nearby. The participating children will experience garden-based nutrition education and will get to plant and watch their items throughout the growing process. Physical activities, recipe tastings, and Rethink Your Drink will be incorporated into the visits. An organic farmer has also been contacted and a partnership has been formed, in which he will come out to the garden and will be featured as a Farmer of the Month.

From just these beginnings, we garnered attention from other Head Start sites, and have formed a partnership to pilot a garden at one of the sites that will also incorporate garden-based nutrition education and physical activity. Children will also be able to do a taste testing of a recipe made with ingredients from the garden and will participate in the planting, growing, caring for, and harvesting of the garden items with help from teachers and volunteers. Parents will be engaged to help care for the garden. The plan is to pilot at one Head Start and hopefully take the idea and implement it at other centers, as several of them have expressed high interest.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

In our initial endeavors with the community garden at the Home Garden Opportunity Center, challenges have included time for upkeep and water restrictions. We are only allowed to water two days a week in the Home Garden area but due to how hot it gets in the Central Valley, plants have died or we've noticed that they aren't growing as quickly as they might have with more water. Another barrier that has come up is accessibility. Home Garden has busy roads and no sidewalks, and many people who live here do not have cars, making it difficult for people to get to the site. Luckily, we were able to arrange transportation of the Head Start and after school children in vans, but this might still prove to be a difficult hurdle to overcome when we open the garden up to the community. While we have just started the garden and the plans to partner with youth and preschool sites are very new, not many barriers have come up yet other than the ones above, but we're sure to experience some.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

As the community garden project just started, our future direction for next fiscal year includes extending out partnership opportunities further into the community including two schools near the site and to offer garden plots to community members who live in the Home Garden area. We are hoping to engage community members so that they have a place to grow healthy fruits and vegetables that can't be found in the stores located in the Home Garden area and thus can provide the items to their family. We're hoping that by engaging the community and creating additional partnerships that this will serve to help sustain the garden beyond SNAP-Ed's means and satisfy long-term goals.

Contact information about this Narrative

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