



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

Title

Marin City's Health Movement – Creating partnerships to enhance healthy food access.

Intervention Summary

For the past three years, the Marin County HHS' Nutrition Wellness Program (NWP) has partnered with the Marin City Community Services District (CSD) to assess the built environment and widen the lens on what affects the health of a community. The County's NWP intentionally established a community engagement process that ensured active community participation and leadership in the program and the creation of the Marin City CX3 program.

Community assessments highlighted the lack of healthy and accessible food. Marin City is a food desert and the community identified establishment of a grocery store as a priority. Since then, we have working with a variety of partners to realize this goal.

In conjunction with our grocery store efforts, we actively support opportunities with the potential to increase healthy food in the community. One exciting development is the Marin City CX3's Summer Community Garden. The garden was created last summer by the CX3 Team to expand the nutrition and physical activity experience of youth attending the Marin City CSD's summer recreational programs.

A highly successful program from its inception, the garden provides youth an excellent venue to learn how to grow, harvest and prepare healthy food. The garden served over 140 children and some parents in its first year. Attendance and requests to join the program have continued to grow. To accommodate the increased participation, the Marin City CSD and the Marin City CX3 Team are currently seeking funding to expand capacity and transform the summer garden to a year-round instructional garden.

The success of the garden was a result of partnerships and dual use agreements between Marin City CSD and its community and County partners. Donations from local businesses and farmers provided the materials and seed starts for the garden. Manzanita Child Development Center provided the space for the garden. UC Cooperative extension provided instruction on pot gardening for the Marin City CX3 Team. The Marin City CX3 Team and the Marin County NWP developed the garden, provide the classes and expanded enrollment in the garden program to youth attending the Marin City Rec. Center and the Manzanita Child Development Center. The Marin City CSD staff help maintain the garden.



Access to healthy and affordable food has been a focus in Marin City for many years. Community members, such as Ms. Green who oversees our Marin City CX3 Team, have long advocated for healthy food access within the community, and in particular within schools, after-school and early childhood centers. As a Board Member of the Sausalito Marin City School District, Ms. Green and other community advocates were instrumental in pushing for healthy meals to be served to children attending the school District and the Marin City CSD afterschool Rec. programs. Their efforts have paid off. In 2013, Bayside/MLK Elementary brought in Conscious Kitchen to serve school meals. Since then, Conscious Kitchen has been serving locally sourced, organic meals prepared on-site, to students at Bayside/MLK Elementary, and has since expanded its services to Willow Creek Elementary. As a result of these efforts, Bayside/MLK Elementary became the first public school nationwide serving 100% organic meals.

Furthermore, the Marin City CX3 Team continues to work closely with the Marin County NWP and provide nutrition education classes within the community – schools, afterschool, children’s garden, community events, and churches -- to support changes and adoption of healthy food choices and increased physical activity.



Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

One of the main barriers we are currently facing is fulfilling the interest and request for nutrition education classes from the community. One example is the success of the children’s community garden. To fulfill this need, we are working with the Marin City CSD and the Marin City CX3 Team to find funds to support expansion of programs.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Marin City’s Health Movement has been exemplary in its transformation of the built environment to support the health and wellness of its residents. Led by the Marin City CSD, active community advocates and partners such as Marin County, Marin City established a Federally Qualified Health Center, built a new gym, and a public park. It is currently raising funds to build a community center. As mentioned above, they are also working closely with the Marin County NWP to establish a grocery store and creatively increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables. We are excited to see the positive changes these environmental supports are yielding and will continue to work towards transforming Marin City from a food desert to a healthy food hub.



Contact information about this Narrative

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