



Advocating for Health:

Progress Toward Healthier Neighborhood Markets

Intervention Summary

NEOP and community members are working with 3 local neighborhood market owners in Santa Maria and Lompoc to promote healthier changes. These 3 stores are owned by the same family, are located in very low SES neighborhoods, and have an average of 9,800 customers per day. The biggest concern identified by the CX3 community advocacy group is the weekly store marketing promotion which states customers will receive a free ride home and a 6-pack of soda with a \$50 purchase. The Rethink Your Drink campaign implemented in our county has educated our low income residents about the harmful role sugar sweetened beverages play. The CX3 community members want to have a healthier option like water, milk, eggs, or fruits and vegetables instead of the free six pack of soda. Our intervention is to work with the retailer to change the promotion but we needed to build a relationship with the owners first. We accomplished this by working collaboratively with them to offer in-store food demos, store tours, and nutrition education events at the stores. This was a win-win for both parties because the retailers noticed more customers were shopping and buying the fresh produce items being tasted in the stores, and the NEOP staff was able to slowly build a trusting relationship with the owners and managers. We've educated the owners about the lack of quality fruits and vegetables they are displaying and discussed optimal floor and shelving space to promote/sell healthier items. We've trained the CX3 community members to advocate for healthier items and the store owners are allowing customers to choose a healthier free item, but only if they request it. We have seen a big difference in the quality of the fruits and vegetables displayed, as well as an increase in healthy indoor and outdoor promotions at the stores, but they are still unwilling to change their advertised promotion at this time.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

- Difficult to secure a NEOP approved meeting location for the weekly CX3 Neighborhood Advocacy Group meetings
 - Solution: Communicated with Project Officer who agreed to let us meet at a city location that is right across the street from the GIS approved neighborhood
- Additional time needed to recruit and educate/train additional CX3 members because some stopped coming when we didn't have a consistent meeting time/place
 - Solution: staff put in extra time and effort to conduct outreach and recruitment
- The Northwest Neighborhood Advocacy Group expressed their safety concerns since weekly meetings were held from 6-7:30pm.
 - Solution: group voted to move meetings to 8:30 -10:00am
- It takes time to build a trusting professional relationship with the retail owners and managers. Needed to address cultural and linguistic challenges.
- Even after being asked by multiple customers for a healthy promotion item, the store owners said they cannot change the advertised promotion due to contractual obligations with the soda company.
 - NEOP staff plans to ask the owner to see the contract to assess the actual language as well as the contract term. We hope this will enable us to either work with the owners to change the advertised promotion if the language isn't clear, or wait until the contract terminates to begin a new healthier promotion.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Short term goal is to work with CX3 members and store owners to offer a healthier marketing promotion instead of the free 6- pack of soda and to create at least one healthier checkout line per retail location. This will be achieved by working with community advocates and the store owners. Long-term goal is to provide enough education, technical assistance, and resources to the store owners that enable them to integrate these healthier changes into the normal day to day operations and continue with healthy marketing even after NEOP staff are no longer providing weekly interventions.

Contact information about this Narrative

Local Health Department Grant Name: Santa Barbara County Public Health Department

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Author's Name: Trina Long

Phone: 805 346-7275

Email: trina.long@sbcphd.org

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