



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

Title

Today's Youth Promoting Big Change in a Small Town

Intervention Summary

The small farming town of Los Molinos, CA, in Tehama County, has a little over 2,000 residents. The downtown area spans 2.2 miles and consists of 4 grocery/convenience stores, several bars and gas stations. Los Molinos High School (LMHS) boasts 180 students, with approximately 70% on free or reduced lunch. The Los Molinos Elementary School includes the middle school students and is located just outside of the downtown area.

The Center for Healthy Communities (CHC) first met the LMHS students through a student ambassador program. Students applied to be part of this group and spoke to elementary school students about the importance of sports in their lives and encouraged them to run in an upcoming Color Dash. CHC led the student ambassador training, sponsored by Dignity Health, teaching the high school students to lead physical activities and then provided tips on to share their story with the elementary school children.

Katie Tenneson, LMHS Agricultural teacher and lead of the FFA club, became our main contact on campus. We met with the 22 students in her Plant Science class 12 times a month from February to June, 2015. Additionally, in August we began working with the 15 students from her Landscaping Design class to begin a new Youth Engagement project for the upcoming 2016 year.

Following the guidelines of the Youth Engagement Initiative, basic nutrition and garden education lessons were taught. Meetings consisted of team building and orientation activities to help the students describe and take pride in their community. Students revitalized their school garden, and discussed what they could do to help in their community.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

The Issue

After working in the elementary school garden and leading a Fun Friday with the children sharing a healthy message, LMHS students decided the problem they faced was one of access. Students are surrounded by beautiful farming land with an abundance of almonds, walnuts, strawberries, tomatoes and more; yet these same students often do not have transportation to take them a few miles down the highway to shop at these fruit stands. In response to this problem the students identified, a Kids Farmer's Market was scheduled at the elementary school. 350 students shopped for free and received 12 to 15 pounds of fresh produce, donated by the North State Food Bank. Bianchi Walnuts, a local grower was invited to participate (both retired LMHS teachers) and they served bags of walnuts to share with students. The school food service director joined in and made trail mix tastings featuring walnuts with a recipe card for each student. UC CalFresh brought their blender bike and shared smoothies. Home Depot donated 350 reusable bags for students to carry their produce. The Safe Education and Recreation for Rural Families (SERRF) afterschool program assisted with take down of the event.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/TehamaSNAPEDCountyProfile.pdf>

Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

- Garden supplies needed; these were donated by Home Depot
- Time in the classroom; this is an ongoing issue. We are not able to come when tests are scheduled or FFA events are taking place out of town.
- Harvesting and watering in the summer; a drip system has been installed
- Connecting with all partners; making sure that the principal of both schools were interested in the upcoming activities, then connecting with the CHC student schedules.
- High School schedules and limitations as to off campus time; students were allowed to walk from the HS to the elementary school after school.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

What's next? In September, a partnership was established with the LMHS Landscape Design class and hosted a healthy booth at the first home football game in three years. Tehama County Health Services Agency, Public Health Division hosted a Rethink your Drink Booth. NuWay Market, the local grocery store, featured student made posters on their front doors inviting the community to attend the game. We provided a tasting of local apples, and the food service director donated watermelon slices. Surprisingly, very few families took a drink or water or ate the produce even though the temperature was 106 degrees. We would like to further educate the students and see if we can increase the participation and consumption of spa water at the concluding football game this season.

Because the first Kids farmer's market was such a success, we would like to host 3 Kids Farmer's Markets in the spring at Los Molinos Elementary School with the help of the youth engagement team and the support of the North State Food Bank.

Coordination and Collaboration

D.1.6 Collaborate with community-based groups that promote physical activity and access to healthy local foods.

1. 10/20/2014 Community Food Alliance Meeting
2. 11/10/2014 Community Food Alliance Meeting
3. 1/ 12/ 2015 Community Food Alliance Meeting
4. 2/9/2015 Community Food Alliance Meeting
5. 4/13/2015 Community Food Alliance Meeting
6. 6/11/2015 Community Food Alliance Meeting
7. 7/13/2015 Community Food Alliance Meeting

Contact information about this Narrative

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