



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

Title

Community, Faith, and Health: A Faith Based Organization Plays a Key Role in Building a Healthy Congregation

Intervention Summary

The community of El Rio is located in unincorporated Ventura County and has a large population of Latino and Mixteco residents. The Oxnard Revival Center (ORC) is a faith-based organization with a large congregation with members from all across Ventura County and it is located in El Rio. The church has established itself in the community and is vested in providing services to its surrounding community that fall outside of religious beliefs. For example, this year, the church hosted a Job and Health Fair on its premises, which was a success and had over 600 residents in attendance. NEOP staff was invited to provide healthy eating messages to those who attended the Job and Health Fair by way of the Latino spin wheel activities, as well as two Rethink Your Drink nutrition education workshops. The church offered and supplied NEOP staff with the space, time and recruitment for the Rethink Your Drink workshops, and this assisted in establishing high attendance for these workshops. The presence of our NEOP team at the Job and Health Fair further solidified the partnership between our program and ORC. As a result of this newly established partnership, two Nutrition Education Class Series were scheduled shortly after the resource fair. These two six-week nutrition class series were completed between April and August of 2015. The first of these nutrition classes was conducted in Spanish, and the second series was presented in English. In total, over 45 people attended either a Spanish or English nutrition education class series. The high attendance rate and interest in the nutrition classes is indicative of the “healthy lifestyle” culture that ORC is fostering among its congregation. Along with the nutrition classes, ORC is also organizing a second Get Fit Challenge with its members that incorporates healthy eating and active living principles. Many of the basic principles learned in regards to nutrition will be implemented in the challenge. Another topic that has been discussed with Church leadership is providing healthier fundraising options such, as selling healthier food items. The steps taken towards creating and supporting a

healthier congregation will assist ORC in reaching out further into surrounding communities with a message of not only faith, but of achieving better health.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

One barrier to providing services immediately after the NEOP team was contacted and during the initial development phase of the partnership was not being able to provide services to the church right away. Although it is located in a high need area, the location was not listed in the approved site for NEOP activities. The solution to this challenge was to add the location to the approved site list. Once the site was approved, activities were able to take place.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Moving forward, NEOP staff will continue to collaborate with ORC to provide a third and fourth wave of nutrition classes while working to provide nutrition resources and support towards its various PSE efforts in providing healthier fundraising options. In addition, the church is in the process of creating a community park so that children in the community have a safe and sound environment where they can be active and play regularly. Currently, the pastor allows children to play soccer and other sports on a dirt and grass patch on the church premises away from any potential harms such as traffic and strangers. In addition, there is some interest in the technical assistance that can be provided in regards to establishing a community garden on ORC property, and garden-based nutrition education to compliment it. The leadership at ORC, has future plans of continuing to offer a Job and Health Fair as well as other activities to its surrounding residents, because of its dedication and commitment to serving its congregation and local community The NEOP Program will continue to serve as a nutrition and physical activity resource and provide any technical assistance and support, as needed.

Contact information about this Narrative

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