

## **CHNA 18 Grantee Final Report-Year Three**

Jewish Family & Children's Service, Healthy Waltham, and Waltham Fields Community Farm

Please respond to the following questions by May 22, 2013.

1. What were your major successes?
  - a. Promoted Selection of Greens from Outreach Market. The Outreach Market recipe tastings were incredibly successful all three grant years. The focus on greens, such as swiss chard, collards, and kale, was very important because these are some of the most nutritious and easy to prepare produce, but least familiar. It was important to make a difference in the hardest to change area of produce choices and we were successful. For example, in 2012 we reached a strong 61% of Market attendees on four dates and the data was overwhelmingly positive on each occasion. In 2012, out of 182 tasters, 84% said they liked the recipe; 72% thought they would take the vegetable home on that day; 68% said they would make the recipe at home; and 44% said tasting the vegetable made them want to take it home. Across all three years, we saw similar results. This is all evidence that having a recipe tasting coupled with the Outreach Market makes a difference in the choices of the people who attend.
  - b. Increased Access to Local Produce. We successfully increased access to local produce for low income residents of Waltham by providing vouchers to use at the Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF) Outreach Market. Over the course of the three year grant, the following increases were achieved:
    - Four new voucher partners were identified and sustained, totaling eight voucher partners moving forward.
    - Number of people using vouchers increased from 247 in 2010 to 553 in 2012. This is an increase of 123% in a short time period.
    - Total number of bags provided increased from 594 in 2010 to 1400 in 2012, which equals a 136% increase.
    - SNAP purchases were implemented in 2011, totaling 25 in the first year, and 57 in the second, showing a rapidly growing segment of the market.
  - c. Created the Culinary Nutrition Group Guide. It is a major accomplishment to have conceived of and be almost finished with the guide on how to run nutrition-cooking groups. This way, the learnings and wisdom from this grant partnership can live on to benefit other organizations and communities for the foreseeable future.
  - d. Engaged the Students at the Waltham Family School in the Nutrition-Cooking Groups. The Waltham Family School (WFS) serves some of the most vulnerable people in all of Waltham because they are new parents with young children,

English language learners, and low income. Because of this, it was exceedingly rewarding to see how engaged and committed they were to their health and the health of their children. When we first met the students at WFS, for example, many did not know brown rice was an option, never mind the nutritional reasons for using it instead of the familiar white rice. After three years, hearing all the changes they have made is inspiring. Some changes included: using healthier fats, choosing more whole grains, eating more fruits and vegetables, and drinking fewer sugar sweetened beverages. Each of these changes alone improves health outcomes. Altogether, they are life changing. One participant said: “I eat breakfast with my children every day,” [as a new improvement]; another said, “We try to eat salmon because before we ate tilapia,” [for heart healthy omega-3 fats].

## 2. How did you address the need(s) that you originally identified?

This project addresses the limited access to healthy food that individuals and families living on low incomes experience in the City of Waltham. The increased risks of obesity and chronic diseases that result from limited access to healthy food and poor nutritional health are already being addressed by some existing resources in Waltham. As a result of this project, these resources are now increased, and are being made available in an increasingly coordinated and comprehensive way. This grant funded a collaboration between the Hunger and Nutrition program at Jewish Family & Children’s Service of Greater Boston (JF&CS), Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF), and Healthy Waltham (HW). Funding from this grant augments or expands upon existing work that serves the larger goals of all three organizations.

In order to improve the nutritional health of low income Waltham residents, we a) built a collaboration between JF&CS, WFCF, and HW; b) provided hands-on nutrition education groups; and c) increased access to fresh and local produce from the WFCF.

- a. Collaboration Building: Each year, representatives from each organization met four times for a total of 12 meetings across three years in order to stay coordinated and plan for future activities. In this way, the meetings provided the foundation for all other work to be accomplished. In addition, we learned from each other and determined how to facilitate three very different organizations working together.
- b. Hands-on Nutrition Education Groups: The goal of the nutrition groups was for group participants to show an improved ability to include more produce despite financial barriers. We measured the impact through surveys focused on knowledge gained and likelihood of repeating new practices at home. Hands-on nutrition education groups included food tasting and/or preparation component plus nutrition information provided by a registered dietitian. We have found the Chef-Registered Dietitian (RD) partnership to be the most effective way to

promote healthy changes among participants. Each group uses healthy, budget-friendly, and simple recipes to illustrate potential changes and they create an avenue to discuss good nutrition in an interesting and relevant way. The more excited participants get about the food, the more likely they are to make the changes. Having a positive food experience when imparting good nutrition advice means the person comes to know it themselves through the experience which is the most effective way of teaching.

- c. Increase Access to Local Produce: In order to increase access to local produce, in partnership with JF&CS and HW, WFCF identified new voucher partners each year of the three year grant. In total, four new voucher partners were identified: REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, Head Start, JF&CS, Dana Court low income housing development. A voucher partner is an organization that can distribute vouchers to low income clients for use at the WFCF's Outreach Market so they can access farm produce for free. There are a certain number of vouchers available each year and it has been WFCF's initiative to increase the reach of these vouchers to help more people. Impact was measured by the number of people reached, as well as number of bags and dollar value of produce provided. In addition, voucher distribution and utilization rates were tracked in order to understand which voucher partner was making the best use of the Outreach Market as a resource.

All of these activities helped to improve access to healthy foods, especially fresh local produce, for low income residents of Waltham.

### 3. What didn't you accomplish that you had originally hoped to accomplish?

Despite accomplishing most goals and having many successes, there were also goals we did not accomplish, as follows:

- a. In 2012, we did not accomplish the goal of longer-term impact data collection. We did not complete this goal because our attempted method was not effective. One survey was returned out of approximately 50 sent two months following groups. We learned that we should have done the follow up within the month of the group, and tried telephone follow up instead of mail to get a better response. In addition to adjusting the method, we learned this requires additional investment of resources.
- b. In 2012, we did not reach the goal number of people for the WFCF field trip. Despite attempting to recruit successfully and reaching out to people in multiple ways including posting flyers around housing complexes, distributing during tenants association meetings and to children at the learning centers, attendance was much lower than we had hoped. We learned that bringing programming to

the housing complex directly is by far the best way to reach people living in public housing, who often have multiple jobs and erratic schedules. In the future, field trips with the learning center programs may be a better way to get kids to the farm, and outreach for Farm Day with transportation provided may remain the best way to reach the parents and get them out to the farm.

- c. Over the three years of the grant period, we did not engage the residents of the housing complexes to the degree we had hoped. We learned it takes a great deal of time and resources to have a consistent presence, build relationships, and get into the culture of each building complex. If we had focused on first developing a relationship with one complex rather than all three at once, we may have been able to meet our expectations in this area at one of the housing complexes. Instead, we were left with only the start of the foundations of a relationship at each complex. Despite this slow start, the programming is now starting to take hold and even attitudes within the Waltham Housing Authority are starting to change. We plan to remain involved to see this change through.

#### 4. What are some lessons learned (both good and bad)?

Please see items discussed in question #3, as well as additional lessons learned below:

- a. Collaboration across three different organizations takes time, patience, and good communication. There are both benefits and challenges of collaborating with shared funding and organizations with similar functions and goals. It takes discipline from the start to facilitate the work running smoothly. There was a learning curve in this area to ensure we were not duplicating efforts, each organization was contributing appropriately, and each had defined roles. It took a lot of communication to get it “right” including ironing out a few misunderstandings along the way. Overall, we all learned a great deal about how build this type of partnership and have appreciated working with such dedicated and skilled colleagues.
- b. As discussed in question #2 regarding the hands-on nature of the cooking-nutrition groups, we found group participants are most open to making healthy changes when they have the chance to try a new food and get excited and feel empowered about making a change.
- c. As the guide details, the Chef-RD partnership is an effective way to reach people with both the exposure to new foods and accurate and reliable nutrition information.

5. How is your project being sustained? For example, did new partnerships develop or did you secure additional funding?

The project is being sustained with a combination of the Guide as described in question #1, and also some natural spin-offs from working together for the past three years, as follows:

- a. Continue to work with the public housing complexes in Waltham as well as the Waltham Family School to promote healthy food choices among residents and participants.
- b. A new food policy council is being created in Waltham that is able to bring together civic, non profit, community, and residents to address food policy changes that can impact how food is being provided and accessed in the City of Waltham. Partial funding for this activity is being granted by CHNA 17.
- c. Now that we have three years of experience with increasing access to healthy foods, we would like to take it a step further and perform focus groups and/or key informant interviews to learn about barriers to accessing locally grown seasonal foods. This is all part of a new Community Transformation Grant that Healthy Waltham received. In addition, a new kitchen is planned for the Community Center at one of the Waltham affordable housing complexes related to this funding.
- d. There are plans for Waltham Fields Community Farm to donate produce to the food pantry at JF&CS, called Family Table. The access to fresh and local produce for free is crucial to maintaining access for clients of the JF&CS food pantry, as well as others across Waltham.

5. Please share ALL data that was collected (including any charts, tables, etc) and please make sure all data is clearly labeled and explained.

Please see **Appendix A**: Summary of Data

6. Please include any materials you developed as part of your project. Electronic versions are preferred, but hard copies can be mailed to me if necessary.

Please see **Appendix B**: Culinary Nutrition Group Guide Draft

Appendix B includes recipes developed during this partnership.