The Appal-TREE Project:

Community-Based Participatory Research to promote healthy eating in Appalachia

NIMHD Grant # R24MD008018
The Setting

High-Poverty Counties in the Appalachian Region
(Counties with Poverty Rates At Least 1.5 Times the U.S. Average)

1960
295 High-Poverty Counties

2006–2010
110 High-Poverty Counties

Dietary implications of persistent poverty

- Rural poverty and related food access challenges lead to poor dietary outcomes
  - KY ranks 3rd for adolescent obesity
  - 3rd for those least likely to meet RDI for F&V
Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) Initiative in Reducing and Eliminating Health Disparities: Planning Phase (R24)

• Three year planning grant
• True CBPR
  – Year 1 was community assessment and determination of research topic and intervention strategy
  – Years 2 and 3 for pilot project implementation and evaluation
• Year 1
  – Establishment of Community Advisory Board
  – Partnership with Community Farm Alliance
  – Qualitative research, assets inventory, needs priorities
Who is the “community” in CBPR?

• Quantitative/survey research not well suited to exploratory questions
• Individual interviews focus on “leaders”
• Focus groups privilege the most vocal
  – Particular challenge in tight-knit, class-based rural communities of Appalachia
  – Hard to express dissenting opinions
• How can we know that the people sharing their views with us accurately represent “the community?”
Structured Public Involvement

- Two community forums, with wide net cast in invitations
  - Followed up with Web option
- Explanation of key components of intervention plan
- Participants gave immediate, but anonymous feedback using electronic keypads
  - High participant satisfaction (8.1/9)
  - High levels of participation (348 in a small, rural county)
  - Can create questions on the fly
  - Can cross-tab with demographics
Community Priorities

• Access to food NOT the priority we expected
• Cost of healthy food was a big issue, esp for those with HH incomes under $50K
• Focus on youth
  – Significant concern about SSB consumption
  – Schools seen as major problem
The Appal-TREE Intervention

- ACT Now – Appalachians Cooking Together NOW
  - Six week cooking class
  - Knife skills, shopping, minimizing waste
  - Held in public housing, community centers
The Appal-TREE Intervention

• Go H₂O
  – Free water bottles and filling stations in all middle and high schools
  – Pro-water instead of anti-SSB
  – Addresses issue of poor water quality/taste
The Appal-TREE Intervention

• Farmers Market Summer Feeding Program
  – Partnered with school food service
  – One of first SFP located at farmers market
  – Anyone under 18 got free smoothie or breakfast burrito
Preliminary Outcomes

- **Cooking classes** – 3 weeks post
  - Increase in monthly salad greens (2.7*), fruit (5.1), and vegetable (2.8) consumption
  - Decrease in candy (-7.9*) and chips (-3.7)

- **Go H₂O**
  - Over 20,000 bottles filled in 2 months
  - Increased frequency of water consumption by 0.13 days/month, compared to decrease of 1.84 days/month at control *

- **FM summer feeding**
  - At FM, 65% consumed at least ½ serving FV
  - Traditional SF site = 46.5% with ½ serving FV
  - At home meals = 22.6% with ½ serving FV
Next steps

• Through spring
  – Complete cooking classes, including 3 month followup data
  – Focus on Go H20 social marketing promotion
    • Incentives to bring water bottles every day
    • Promotional social media, poster, other campaigns to shift social norms

• Next grant
  – Build on pilot in one county to replicate in neighboring counties
  – Incorporate social marketing skills transfer through summer camp/workshop
Questions?

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