



# Live Well Gratiot Prescription for Health

## Overview

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Prescription for Health (RxFH) aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and support healthy behavior changes among patients with lower incomes and chronic disease. Prescription for Health, in this context, involves a health care provider referring an appropriate patient to the community program, where the patient receives a 'prescription' for fresh fruits and vegetables at the local farmers market, as well as participating in a series of nutrition education classes. A pilot program of this nature took place June-October 2018 through collaboration between Alma Family Practice, Alma Transportation, Gratiot-Isabella RESD, Mid-Michigan District Health Department, MidMichigan Medical Center – Gratiot, Michigan State University- Extension, and the St. Louis Farmers Market. The program was funded by the Gratiot County Community Foundation.

MidMichigan Health completed a Community Health Needs Assessment in 2016 which indicated obesity as a leading health problem. In Gratiot County, 35.6% of adults reported being obese, while another 34% indicated being overweight, signifying that 69.6% of Gratiot County adults are at an unhealthy weight. The assessment also showed that 85.9% of adults did not consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables to support overall health. The burden of chronic disease falls most heavily on the most vulnerable; the Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey stated that those with the lowest incomes are nearly three times more likely to report a lifetime history of diabetes than those with the highest incomes.

## Pilot Program June-October 2018

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The pilot program consisted of a six (6) week evidence based nutritional education class (Eat Healthy, Be Active). Upon completing each nutrition class, participants received coupons that could be used at the St. Louis Farmers Markets to purchase local fresh fruits and vegetables as a means of increasing their fruit and vegetable consumption. At the beginning and end of the program, participants completed assessments to determine their level of behavior change; body mass index, weight, blood pressure, blood lipids and A1C were also measured to evaluate changes in health outcomes. Transportation assistance was offered to nutrition classes and the farmers market for participants who faced transportation barriers.



## **Referral Process**

Care managers from local health clinics refer patients that have risk factors for chronic disease (pre-diabetic, hyperlipidemia, hypertension etc.) Many patients have more than one risk factor. The referrals are sent to Mid-Michigan District Health Department, who is the fiduciary and keeper of the program data. Patients are de identified and given a participant ID for purposes of data collection. Patients attend an enrollment session at one of the participating medical clinics to learn about the program, provide consent, complete a pre-program survey, set program health goals, and receive their first \$10 in food coupons. The participant roster is then sent to the instructor of the nutrition classes at MSU-Extension.

## **6 Week Nutrition Education**

The nutrition education consists of an evidence-based class called Eat Healthy, Be Active that meets once a week for six weeks at the St. Louis Farmers Market. At the beginning and end of the program, participants complete a standardized assessment MSU Extension uses for all such classes to determine their level of behavior change. They also complete a pre and post survey as part of the Michigan Prescription for Health Statewide Learning Network.

## **Budget**

Funds are used to provide \$100 in food coupons for participants; \$10 for enrolling, \$10 for each nutrition class (total of \$60), \$10 for reinforcing behavior after enrollment classes completed, and \$20 for final trip to the farmers market and completing a post-program survey. Additional funds are used for transportation, advertising, printing, and prizes for a drawing at the program.

## **2018 Results**

As expected, the Eat Healthy, Be Active evaluations showed 73% of respondents identified at least one way their nutrition had improved, 71% reported increased consumption of fruits and vegetables and 92% said they had increased physical activity. The most striking thing to us is that it appeared the participants had formed a community. We had not anticipated this and did not measure it, but we observed participants shopping together, helping each other and attending the market outside of class. We think this behavior may have helped participants overcome some of their social and emotional barriers to being healthy. What we do know is that adherence to the program was strikingly high. Of 34 people referred to the program, 28 enrolled, and all but two of those enrolled (93%) completed the program. Compare this to the WIC program where only about half of participants stick with it even though they too receive free food. Regarding clinical results, we did not expect to see measureable improvement in a small short duration program like this. At the beginning of the program, average patient BMIs were 38.6 kg/m<sup>2</sup> compared to 37.6 kg/m<sup>2</sup> at the end. Average A1C's were initially 8.0% and were 7.3% at the end.



Because of the small sample size these changes were not statistically significant and only 20/28 patients have had follow up appointments with their provider at this time.

- 34 total referrals
- (28/34) 82% of referrals enrolled
- (26/28) 93% of those enrolled completed the program, 2 could not complete due to medical reasons
- (26 of 28) 93% 'graduated' from nutrition education program (completing at least 4 of the six classes)
- Total food assistance dollars received by vendors at St. Louis Farmers Market in 2018 was \$8,372. Of that, \$2,463 was from Prescription for Health
  - 30% of food assistance sales

#### **What Sets Us Apart?**

- We are one of the only Prescription for Health programs that captures medical data
- The participants have a relationship with their care managers and follow up with them. Many brought their Prescription for Health information with them to their medical appointments
- Many programs in Michigan offer very minimal nutrition education. Our curriculum is an evidence based nutrition class.
- Building social support was not intended but developed, participants would shop with each other and meet at the farmers market even after the program ended

**2018 Funding Provided By:** Gratiot County Community Foundation

#### **In Partnership With:**

MidMichigan Medical Center – Gratiot  
Mid-Michigan District Health Department  
Gratiot-Isabella Regional Educational School District  
Michigan State University Extension  
Alma Family Practice  
Gratiot Integrated Health Network  
Alma Transportation  
St Louis Famers Market