

Nourishing Networks Workshop

Logan County – July 14, 2017

Preliminary Report

Nourishing Networks Logan County: Workshop Reflections and Report

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Introduction

Each year we witness a widening gap in the U.S. between those who can access high quality, affordable, nutritious foods and those who cannot. Across West Virginia, where disparities in food access are particularly acute, many intrepid advocates are working hard to close that gap. How can we bring these diverse food access initiatives together around one table to advance community health and wellbeing for all West Virginians?

On July 14, 2017 the Logan County Nourishing Networks Workshop brought together folks from different backgrounds, expertise, and experience to explore food access barriers and the effectiveness of healthy food access strategies in Logan County. We had some fun, learned together, and used shared tools to deepen our understanding of what limits access to healthy food and what we can do about it. Our workshop advanced through three stages.

1. First we formed four teams of 5+ participants to conduct a rapid assessment of healthy food access barriers in Logan County. Participants worked together to identify access barriers.
2. Second we reconvened and worked together to identify community assets and food resources which could be mobilized to improve access to healthy food for all.
3. Third, reflecting on the key barriers to healthy food access in Logan and the major assets that could be mobilized our teams developed strategies to improve access to healthy food.

Over the course of a mere 6 hours (10am-4pm), our 20 participants collectively identified:

- 45+ Healthy Food Access Barriers
- 18+ Community Assets to Support Healthy Food Initiatives
- 9 New Healthy Food Access Strategies

In this brief reflection on the workshop we present the results of these discussions, collective analyses and strategic planning exercises. The intention of the document is to inform the next phase of consultation among those who wish to continue working together to advance a healthy food access plan for Logan County. Here we aim to document and represent the findings our collective experiment in its most raw format. In the conclusion your facilitators offer their reflections on the process and potential next steps.

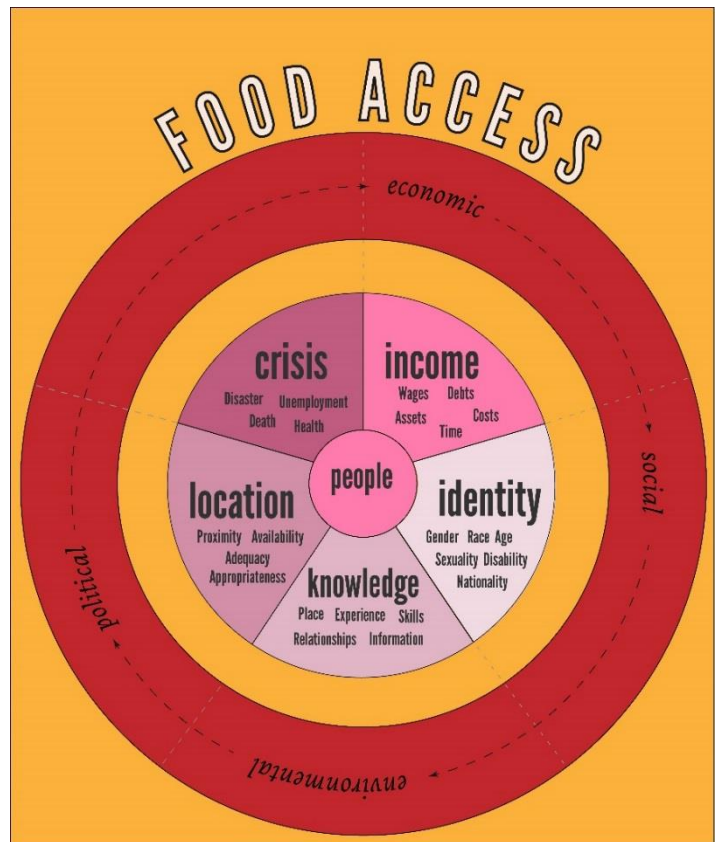
Overall, we found the Logan County Nourishing Networks Workshop to be a tremendous success and look forward to accompanying you in a process of planning and action that enhances the amazing work you are doing to improve access to healthy food in Logan County and beyond.

Access Barriers: What limits people's access to healthy food?

At the center of our concern about healthy food access is people. Across West Virginia many people confront significant barriers to accessing affordable, adequate, nutritious foods. Some of the forces that affect people's ability to access healthy food are represented in our food access barriers wheel (represented to the right). The inner circle is composed of a series of social constraints that have the most direct impact on the ability of an individual, a household, or a community to access food.

Income refers to the effect of someone's resources in wages or assets as well as the costs of food, debts carried, and the time limits placed on those who work rather than growing food for themselves. As a majority of people in the U.S. work to earn money to buy food, this is the largest constraint on food access.

Identity refers to the way someone's gender, race, disability, sexuality, nationality or age affects their ability to access food. **Knowledge** refers to what people know, what experience or skills they have, their place-based understanding, and the relationships they have with others. **Location** refers to people's proximity to healthy food outlets, the availability of particular foods, as well as the ability to grow food. And last, **Crisis** refers to disasters, unemployment, health issue or death that can undermine food access for an individual, household or community.



At any one time, people may confront one or more of these social constraints to accessing healthy food. Furthermore, there are a range of indirect forces that also shape access. We characterize these as broad structural forces such as economic change (financial crisis, mine closures), political change (budget cuts, program elimination), environmental change (flooding, pollution), or social change (expansion or reduction in civil rights). These indirect structural forces are also constantly changing and thereby shaping the direct forces that shape people's access to healthy food. Environmental change in the form of a flood disaster. Economic change in the form of layoffs or wage reductions. Social change in the form of racism and marginalization. Political change in the form of cutting nutritional program budgets. In conjunction we understand people's ability to navigate these barriers to be harrowing at best. It is for this reason that there are various healthy food access initiatives that approach these barriers and help people to overcome them.

Logan County: Healthy Food Access Barriers

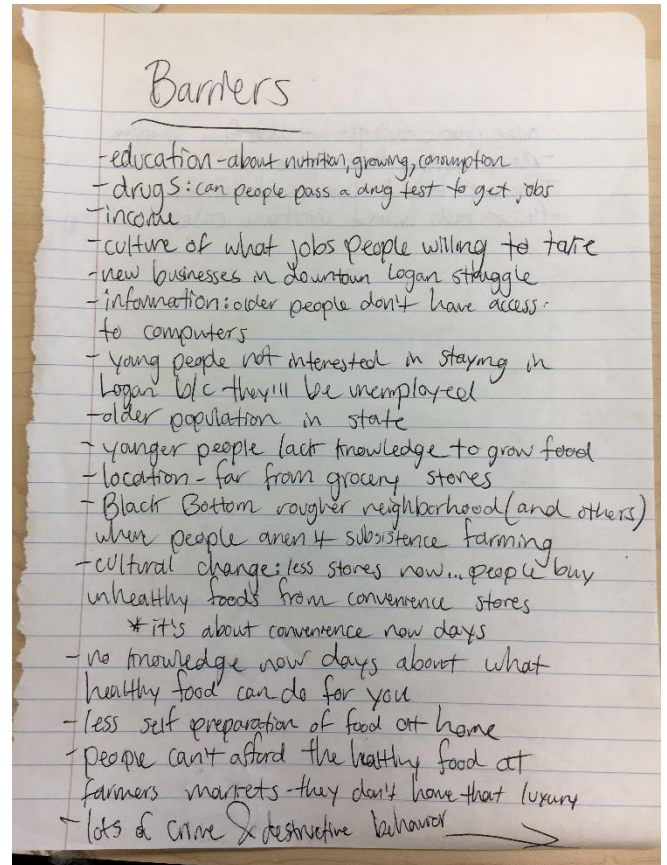
According to the workshop participants low-income households in Logan County confront significant barriers to accessing healthy food. Furthermore participant observed particular gaps in the strategic efforts to improve access to healthy food. These concerns can be grouped into five main categories:

- 1) Socio-economic Barriers
- 2) Geographic/Infrastructural Barriers
- 3) Policy/Engagement Barriers
- 4) Agricultural Development Barriers
- 5) Community Participation Barriers

Here we briefly report on the findings in these five areas of concern.

Socio-economic

- “Sweet spot” for maximum public benefits makes becoming autonomous difficult
- Increase in low-wage service industry employment, decrease in high-wage labor
 - Closure of mines and lumber mills
- Purchasing items from Walmart and reselling at small stores for higher price
- Increased prices at Save-a-Lot at the beginning of the month
- Increased price of produce in Winter
- Grandparents & Great-grandparents supporting entire family
 - Young parents
- Addiction
 - Passing a drug test to get jobs?
- Education (about nutrition, growing, and shopping habits)
- Income
 - Can't afford the healthy food at farmers market – they don't have that luxury
- Culture of what jobs people are willing to take these days
- New businesses in downtown Logan struggle
- Information (older people don't have access to computers/internet)
- Young people not interested in staying in Logan because they will be unemployed



- Cultural change: there are less stores now. People get the food from convenience stores now. It's all about convenience.
- Less self-preparation of food at home
- Lots of crime and destructive behavior
 - Flower beds by the courthouse were vandalized
 - Places getting broken into
- Negative tones in Logan
- Pricing
 - at local store; anecdote about price for watermelons changing from \$8 one week to \$18 the next week
- Elder abuse

Geographic/infrastructural

- Infrastructure
 - Retail Consolidation
 - Accessibility/Convenience of fast food
 - Location (many people are far from grocery stores)
 - Transportation/convenience
 - Anecdote about Seniors not having transport to Charleston (where there are better deals), or even having transport to PRIDE to collect the coupons - they often have to send a proxy
 - No bus except for Tri-River
 - Weather issues
 - Flooding
 - Accessing DHHR is a challenge
 - Need money to park, hard to get to/access the actual office once in the building
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Policy/Engagement

- Discrepancies in state benefit program
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Agricultural Development

- High percentage of home ownership in the county is likely a reflection of an aging population
 - Access to land for young people is hard
 - Younger population who should be growing food are largely renting
 - Loss of a culture of growing/self-provisioning
 - Grandparents pushed parents away from self-sufficiency
 - Knowledge wasn't passed down
 - 1950-1970, period of abundance made growing your own food unnecessary
 - No time to grow food
 - No money to invest in agriculture
 - Anecdote about road to Man being less accessible/new road not open yet; Man is a big community but "doesn't feel like part of the same county"
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Community Participation

- Low CEP program participation
 - Distance of bus routes
 - Quality of school food
- Issues surrounding socialization and not used to eating certain foods
- PRIDE went in the hole by \$20,000 while they used food bank goods
- Anecdote about difficulty of integrated social services - Sex workers come into what has typically been a senior pantry and soup kitchen was opened to the general public/homeless. The sex workers allegedly came in high and made the seniors uncomfortable, and they reportedly stole toiletries
- Short hours of Energy Express
- Older population in the state
- Younger people lack the knowledge to grow food
- No knowledge anymore about what healthy food can do for you
- Black Bottom is a rougher neighborhood (there are some others as well) and not many people are subsistence farming there
- Older people can't get out and farm sometimes
- Mindset/cultural
 - prep knowledge, not used to trying new vegetables
- Closed Farmers Market

- Sense of uncertainty
- Lack of connected goals
 - “Because we don’t know things we’re not good at working as a team”
 - Hard to create links between counties
 - Culture of independence
 - Problem of ‘my commerce going to help somebody else’
- Information dissemination
 - How to reach people, how to communicate in ways people understand
 - Disconnect between seniors and technology
- lack of knowledge/difficulty learning about different resources
- Not a lot of choice in Logan for seniors to spend vouchers
- High percentage of land ownership in the county is likely a reflection of an aging population
 - Access to land for young people
 - Younger population who should be growing food are largely renting
- Loss of a culture of growing/self-provisioning
- Grandparents pushed parents away from self-sufficiency
- Anecdote about road to Man being less accessible/new road not open yet; Man is a big community but “doesn’t feel like part of the same county”

Community Assets for Healthy Food Initiatives in Logan County

Central to any plan to overcome healthy food access barriers is assessing the assets within a given community. In this phase of the workshop participants identified many different assets in Logan County that contribute to community well-being and specifically healthy food access initiatives. We have categorized these assets into six asset types. Human Qualities

- Physical/Built/Infrastructure Assets
- Organizational Assets
- Government Assets
- Individual Assets
- Asset-based Activities / Projects

Human Qualities

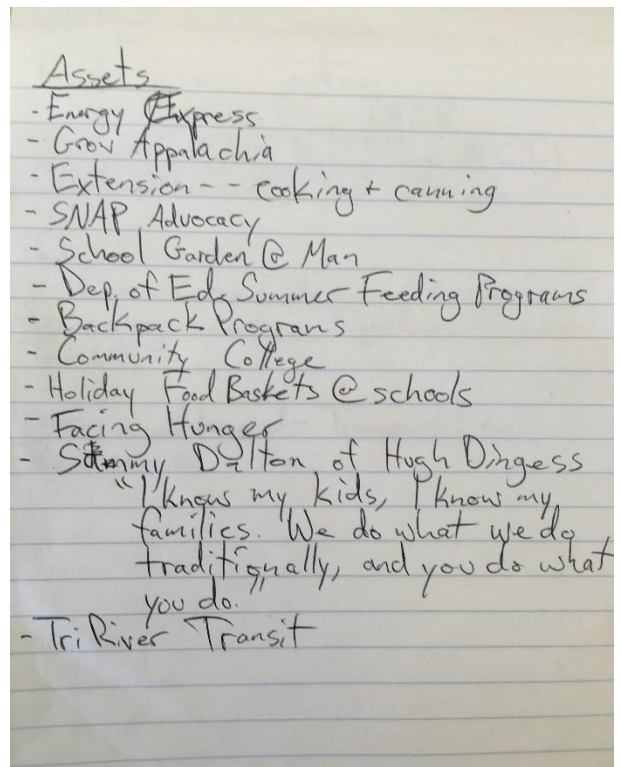
- SNAP Advocacy

Physical/Built/Infrastructure Assets

- Tri-River Transit

Organizational Assets

- Facing Hunger
- Church food pantries



- First Presbyterian
- Christian Fellowship Center
- The First Baptist Church of McConnell
- Monclo Church
- Crawley Creek Christian Center
- Huff Creek Community Ministries
- Baptist Help Center
- Miracle Island Unlimited
- Foodlink
 - But question of how to get resource out to everyone

Government Assets

- Williamson Community College
 - Williamson is starting Ag classes
- WV Department of Education - summer feeding programs/sites, facilitation through churchs

Individual Assets

- Sammy Dalton of Hugh Dingess
 - "I know my kids, I know my families. We do what we do traditionally, and you do what you do.

Asset-based Activities / Projects

- Energy Express
- Grow Appalachia
 - Garden program
- School Garden @ Man
- Backpack Programs
- PRIDE senior vouchers
- WVU Extension canning/cooking class
- High School clubs do holiday baskets (only during holidays)
- Hunters for the Hungry
- Double up Foodbucks
- Kids Nutrition in Home Daycares

What strategies enable people to access healthy food?

People access healthy food through various mechanisms. While many people who might be reading this report primarily access healthy food by spending their wages in a market (grocery store) or through the farming sector (local farmers market) many other individuals, households and communities cannot afford to access food only in this way. Some of the strategies and initiatives to improve people's access to healthy food are represented in the food access strategy wheel (represented on next page).

The inner circle is composed of the primary mechanisms that people access healthy food. Market refers to grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, dollar stores and the like where people exchanges wages for food. State refers to government programs such as SNAP, WIC and School programs that provide direct subsidies to offset the cost of food for individuals and households (especially children) who lack the money to access food in the market. Charity refers to free food rations provided by food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens that is funded by donation. Farming refers to grower-based initiatives to sell produce through farmers markets and other mechanisms. And lastly, self-provisioning refers to practices of hunting, foraging, fishing or growing your own food. Taken together these strategies represent the dominant and divergent ways that people access food.



At any one time an individual, household or community may utilize a combination of these strategies to gain or maintain access to food. Furthermore, as this wheel demonstrates, the retail marketplace is not the only way in which people access food. Government programs play a major role in supporting low-income families and those confronting crises. Charitable assistance agencies also play a supplementary role. Farmers make important local contributions to food access and hunters put away a lot of protein for the winter. However, surrounding the inner ring again are the broader structural forces that shape these various strategies. In conjunction with the barriers described earlier these can indirectly impact people's ability to exercise these food access strategies. Economic change can lead retailers to close up shop or raise prices. Political changes can cause the loss of vital government nutrition programs. Charities may become overwhelmed by the growing need or fail to raise enough money to meet demand. Farmers may confront environmental changes like social degradation or drought. Self-provisioners might confront disease in their gardens, declining game habitat or access to fishing areas. It is for this reason that healthy food initiatives work with people to develop creative

strategies and protect vital programming that enables people to sustain themselves, their households and their communities.

How can we promote innovative action to support healthy food access?

Through four years of research we have observed and assessed a range of strategies to improve access to health food for all in West Virginia. Most commonly, these strategies operate in distinctive programming associated with the State, Charitable or Farming/Self-Provisioning mechanisms described above.

However, there are also some very interesting innovations that we describe as Hybrid Healthy Food Initiatives that bring together strange bedfellows and mix together various strategies to close food gaps and promote community well-being. Many of these hybrid healthy food initiatives are project-based and represent outside-the-box thinking. Mobile farmers markets, Hunters for the Hungry, Food pantry CSA programs, Double Bucks Farmer's Markets, and much more. Furthermore, in some cases, these hybrid healthy food initiatives are leading to new policy innovations that link people across these differences. For instance, the recent Farm to Food Bank bill in WV brought charitable agencies, farmers and state officials together to create an innovative law providing farmers tax breaks for farm food donations.

We believe there is much to learn from the creative thinking that comes from bringing many people with different expertise and experience to the table. Hybrid healthy food initiatives are just one example of how we can work together to imagine and enact a different food future.

Thinking Outside the Box: Beyond Program-Thinking

One of our goals with our workshop in Logan was to invite participants to break away from existing program thinking. We all work within programs of some sort or another. Programs are structured interventions that are often funded on an annual basis, have staff, clearly defined goals to promote change and assess effectiveness. Government agencies have programs. Non-profits have programs. Corporations have programs. Schools have programs. There are numerous existing state-based, charitable and educational programs focused on improving access to healthy food. Many of these programs are funded, operate effectively, and are successful according to their own measures and forms of assessment. Programs work. Yet, programs can also be limited in scope, ineffective or they can stagnate in their efficacy.

Reinvigorating Strategic Thinking. One of the reasons that programs stagnate is that we forget that they are the result of strategic thinking, strategic projects and strategic policies that have come before. Programs have a history, a set of logics, assumptions, and parameters that are rooted in past processes of strategic planning and design by individuals and groups. These folks developed these programs based on a particular framing of the problem. Today those problems may have changed or opportunities may have arisen. To get past existing program-thinking we

need to reinvigorate the kind of energy that comes from strategic thinking, collective inquiry, and innovative actions.

How do we get beyond existing program-thinking?

To get beyond program-thinking we think it is important to begin by fostering conversations among folks who are engaged in various forms of programming, policy work, and projects that address healthy food access in our communities. Second, we mobilize information on limits and barriers to healthy food access to serve as a basis for collective problem identification. Third we invite participants in diverse teams to consider new strategies (not programs) to mobilize community assets to address these collectively defined problems. And fourth, we invite participants to work together to come up with creative campaigns that advance policies and projects that address healthy food access barriers. Using a series of exercises, the teams participate in a strategy planning process that moves us beyond program thinking and toward new kinds of collective action that addresses pernicious problems.

What are healthy food access strategies?

We define healthy food access strategies along two essential axes of innovation: the development of healthy food access policies and projects. These two strategic approaches are very different from programs. Indeed, as stated earlier, policies and projects result in programs; not the other way around.

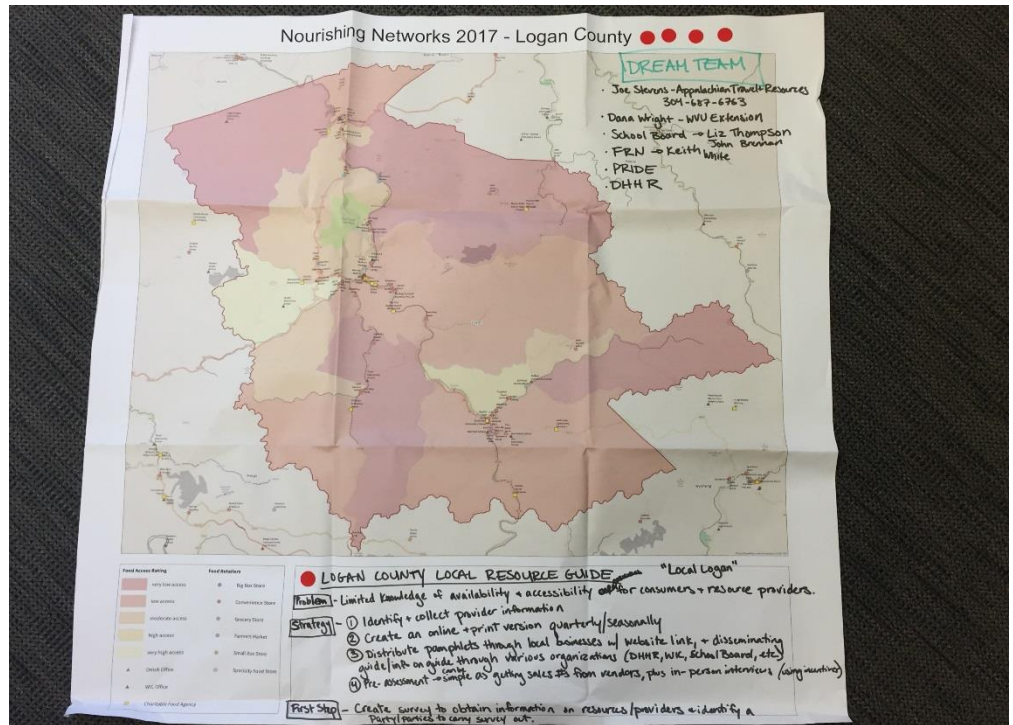
Policy-focused strategies target local, state and national laws, rules, public assets, activities or budget allocations to improve healthy food access. Policy strategies can reform the way schools, universities, corporations, and government operate. These strategies employ research, communication, networking, canvassing, organizing and lobbying efforts to create change. Usually the goal is to persuade a decision-maker to adopt a given set of practices, rules or adjust their goals to benefit your constituency. The tactics include new policy proposals, defending existing programs, consciousness raising, and coalition building. These strategies may in some cases have longer timeframes to implement, but not always. Indeed with the right organizing, conditions and constituency (as a result of organizing efforts) policy change can happen quickly (even faster than projects). Because policy-focused strategies affect existing institutions they can have far reaching impacts from on the direction of programs that affect many people.

Project-focused strategies pilot and test out our new ideas and bring together novel resources and people to create a model, case study, or example. Projects tend to advance on more restricted timeframes that reflect their experimental nature. Projects have a beginning and an end. To evolve into a permanent activity or program that improves access to healthy food, projects must either result in volunteer-driven ownership or sustained financial support from private foundations, state, charitable or market-based efforts. Unlike policy strategies, projects can often

take shape independently and autonomously from any particular constituency. This gives projects a nimble and entrepreneurial feel and can result in quick learning to be adapted to various future circumstances.

Logan County: Healthy Food Access Strategies

The strategies below were developed in consultation among participants in the Nourishing Networks Logan Workshop to improve healthy food access. These strategies are a result of group consultation following a collective assessment of the barriers to healthy food access in the county and the community assets that could be mobilized to address the problems



identified. Each team arrived at their strategy through a different process whereby members evaluated potentials and set priorities. While these strategies were developed rapidly, they nevertheless represent several promising avenues for near term collective action which could be carried forward in Logan County.

Nutritional Advocate in Every School

Barrier Addressed

- Low participation in free and reduced lunch/breakfast program in Logan County schools.

Approach

- Currently in Logan, there have been many less students participating in free and reduced school lunch programs. To combat this, there may be a need for policy change.

Tactics

- The food is already paid for, so the next question is: How do we make it taste good? By using behavioral economics, the nutritious foods at school will be marketed different to the students. Instead of just putting out these nutritious foods, the foods will also come along with more information on the foods and by presenting them in a way that makes them sound more desirable and likely to be eaten by students.

- A nutritional advocate could be incorporated into each school full-time to talk to students and provide them with valuable information about food, nutrition, cooking, etc.

New Food Days in School

Barrier Addressed

- Limited education offered in schools around nutrition alongside low participation rates in free and reduced breakfast/lunch program.

Approach

- Pilot Program in three Logan County Headstart Programs: Lorado, Mill Creek, and Logan.

Tactics

- In April, May, August, and September, the Mobile Market will visit the Headstart sites, letting the children choose what new, local foods they want to try in the week. They are taught about the foods, and then they eat their selection either that week or in coming weeks. When parents arrive to pick up kids, they can also purchase produce from the mobile markets. Bea will bring produce to PRIDE from Grow Appalachia participants as well. For the rest of the year, we will continue the existing model of new food programming at Headstart—providing new foods that are not necessarily local or seasonal, but healthy nonetheless. We will conduct surveys to assess the impact on the diets at home. We will develop consistent metrics that we may provide compelling reporting to the Logan County Board of Education next year. Progress will be publicly shared through the Headstart quarterly newsletter.

Investigating Unfair Prices for Fruits and Vegetables

Barrier Addressed

- Unlawful price gouging in retail stores targeting low income people and families that receive state assistance.

Approach/Tactics

- Within the community, an interest group could be formed to further investigate the situation with price gouging at the beginning of each month when people/families who receive state assistance draw their benefits. This group will examine the fraudulent business behaviors and abuse of the system that is taking place and take a stand by lobbying for policy change against these actions.

Food and Social Services Hub

Barrier Addressed

- There is no farmers market or food hub in Logan County. Additionally, transportation creates a divide between people accessing many other services also important to a healthy wellbeing.

Approach/Tactics

- Expanding Southwestern Regional Day Court Center's gardening efforts. To do this, the organization will need better quality dirt, money, more workers, and more education for the workers. Grant funding can aid in making these things possible. Workers can gain soft skills, college credit, or food.

- Along with an increase in gardening efforts to be able to sell nutritious foods to people at the 84 Lumber building, 4-5 other collaborators will offer other services such as health care, a flea market, and clothing from clothing banks. This way, Logan County citizens can come to the site and access several services in one trip.
- Working to get Tri-River Transit to add a stop along the bus route that will drop people off at the food/services hub.

Food Resource Guide

Barrier Addressed

- Limited knowledge of availability and accessibility for consumers and resource providers.

Approach

- Tackles problem of awareness/education
- Don't use DHHR as much as we should

Tactics (Campaign)

- Gather consumer input and create resource guide based on consumer needs
- Distributed in online and paper forms, through mailing and an app
- Include map of foodbanks, physical/mental health activities, etc.
- From focused strategy session:
 - Identify and collect provider information
 - Create an online and print version that's updated quarterly/seasonally
 - Distribute pamphlets through local business advertising guide with website link, and disseminating guide/information on guide through various organizations (DHHR, WIC, School Board, etc.)
- Pre-assessment - can be simple as getting sales numbers from vendors before and after guide distribution, plus in-person interviews or surveys (using incentives to get people to interview/fill out survey)
- Concrete first step to implement plan being to create a survey to obtain information on resources/providers and identify a party/parties to carry survey out

Dream Team

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Education • DHHR • FRN • WIC • Grow Appalachia • PRIDE • Step by Step • Extension • Lonnie from Chattaroy Tomato Company | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From focused strategy session: • Joe Stevens - Appalachian Travel and Resources, 304-687-6763 • Dana Wright - WVU Extension • School Board - Liz Thompson, John Brennan • FRN - Keith White • PRIDE • DHHR |
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Outcomes

- Opportunities for citizens to access transportation, fresh food, and physical/mental health resources

Mobile Market (Strategy 1)

Barrier Addressed

- Lack of transportation and grocery stores evoking low access to healthy food.

Approach

- Transportation of product easier than asking people to move; sometimes people are too busy/don't have time, not

able to get around due to transportation issues

Tactics (Campaign)

- Create connection between PRIDE and Grow Appalachia so seniors have more choices for vouchers
- Have the mobile market program be available during after-work hours and on weekends to make it available to those who work traditional 9-5 hours

- In addition, churches could cover the cost of produce boxes that can be delivered into the communities
- Could create a connection between the mobile market and the FARMacy program

Dream Team

- PRIDE
- Grow Appalachia
- Churches
- Step by Step
- Extension

- Williamson Health and Wellness Center
- Logan Regional Hospital
- Smaller retailers
- Farmers

Outcomes

- Increased access (and ease of access) of fresh fruits and vegetables to communities in Logan County

Mobile Market (Strategy 2)

Barrier Addressed

- Lack of transportation and grocery stores evoking low access to healthy food.

Approach

- Bring Mobile Market to Logan Seniors Sites and HUD Houses
- FQHC sign on with prescription vouchers

- Bring Mobile Market to Aracoma Hotel lot across DHHR office
- Double SNAP

Tactics(Campaign)

- Address and overcome issues with transportation, discrepancies in state assistance, and retail consolodation

Dream Team

- PRIDE
- Williamson Farmers Market
- City of Logan

- Grow Appalachia
- Lettuce farmer

Addressing Income problem

Barrier Addressed

- Lack of education regarding nutrition alongside poor spending habits on a small budget.

Approach

- Question of how you get people to buy healthy food instead of buying convenient/processed food

- Should be fun; also people want something from nothing
- People risk averse/ fearful / in survival mode

Tactics (Campaign)

- Include price comparisons in local resource guide; even something like have the price of a Wendy's sandwich vs. chicken breast from the grocery store

- Get information from people to see what is important to them
- Create a tool to help

Dream Team

- Extension
- DHHR
- Food Pantries
- WIC

- Schools
- PRIDE
- FRN
- Maria from Williamstown

Outcomes

- Have local people/communities be able to buy fresh produce/vegetables