



# 2015-2016 FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION EDUCATION

## SUMMARY

The 2013 and 2016 St. Luke's University Health Network (SLUHN) Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) priority needs include improving access to care and reducing health disparities, promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing chronic disease, increasing mental/behavioral health services, improving child & adolescent health and improving elder health. Understanding the Social Determinants of Health in our communities plays a key role in our CHNA and implementation process and plans. The CHNA report identified food insecure areas, food deserts, low access to grocery stores, and associated higher rates of obesity in these identified areas. As a result, SLUHN is focused on dedicating and aligning efforts, including researching best practices and tools, to implement chronic disease prevention and promote healthy living initiatives for our patients, staff and vulnerable communities.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- As part of the Adopt a School program, St. Luke's partners with Kellyn Foundation to build school gardens and educate children and families about healthy eating habits through the "Eat Real Food" and "Garden as a Classroom" programs.
- St. Luke's is a sponsor of the new Kellyn Foundation "Eat Real" Mobile Market, bringing local farm food (including produce from the St. Luke's Rodale Institute Organic Farm at St. Luke's Anderson Campus) to "food insecure" neighborhoods in Bangor, Bethlehem and Easton (launched in June 2016).
- In Partnership with the Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley:
  - \* During the 2105 growing season, conducted a Farmer's Market at HCLV with Buy Fresh, Buy Local and Bechdolt's Farm distributing \$10 produce vouchers to community members and St. Luke's patients who engaged in Healthy Living programming.
  - \* Created a Health Equity Internship with Lehigh University for students to work with the HCLV Food Pantry to increase healthy foods and access for hundreds of food insecure families in the South Bethlehem area.
- Co-chaired the Consumer Education Committee as part of the Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council.
- St. Luke's Rodale Institute Organic Farm at St. Luke's Anderson Campus completed its second growing season and has doubled from five to eleven acres and increased from growing 12 to 30 produce varieties.
  - \* Implemented gleaning practices to supply weekly produce donations to New Bethany Ministries and the Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley.
- The St. Luke's Miners Campus created an Adopt a School Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program funded by a Federal Office of Rural Health Policy HRSA Rural Health Outreach grant.

## SUCCESES

- The SLM Adopt a School CSA distributed 8 shares of local produce for 10 weeks for up to 100 students through the federal free lunch program at 3 local locations. It also provided 8 shares for two weeks during a community walking program where participants completed mini surveys on vegetables consumption and were provided free organic produce for participating in the walking program.
- 64% of the distributed \$10 vouchers were used at the HCLV Farmer's Market where participants received education on healthy cooking and Double SNAP benefits.
- Students from three school districts participating in the SLH Adopt a School Program, including Allentown School District, Bangor School District and Bethlehem Area School District, toured the St. Luke's Rodale Organic Farm with Lynn Trizna, Farm Project Manager. Students learned about seed germination, planting, harvesting, bee keeping and composting.
- Over 1000 students from four school districts participating in the SLH Adopt a School Program including Allentown School District, Bangor School District, Bethlehem Area School District and Panther Valley School District learned about eating "real food" and planting a garden from Kellyn Foundation. Students got to participate in a salad day, tasting mesclun mix, kale, and spinach grown in the school garden.

## CHALLENGES & NEXT STEPS

- 36% of those who received \$10 HCLV Farmer's Market vouchers did not use them. This has been a common trend seen from the SLH patient population and community. SLH staff is committing to community engagement practices to ensure a comfort level is met with those being referred to programs. For instance, during the 2016 growing season, staff will be distributing \$5 produce vouchers for the Eat Real Mobile Market and will be walking them to the mobile market stop, showing them around and introducing them to Kellyn Foundation staff.
- As St. Luke's continues to address food security, staff need to learn how to address cultural challenges to food insecurity and obesity such as sedentary lifestyles, increased portion sizes, stresses of poverty and challenges adopting lifestyle changes and mandating them. Partnering with HCLV and Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley is helping St. Luke's begin to build trust with the community and learn ways to overcome these challenges.
- The Adopt a Schools participating in the "Garden as a Classroom" program are growing tremendous school gardens, but challenges exist for parents to care for and harvest the garden during the summer months increasing their access to fresh, organic produce. Opportunities for parent garden liaisons are being explored to develop a school harvesting schedule during the summer months.



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