



Communities of Excellence- CX³ Project Report to the Community ***Healthy Eating, Active Living and Obesity Prevention in Marin County***

Background of CX³ Project:

The Marin CX³ Project is a collaborative group of Marin community agencies and residents working together to improve the overall food environment and increase access to healthy foods in low income* neighborhoods using the CDPH CX³ framework of indicators.

Assessment and Data Collected-2007

In 2007, the Marin County-CHPS-Nutrition Wellness Program team completed a comprehensive assessment using GIS mapping and field study of the Canal, Marin City and San Rafael-Davidson census tracts. The resulting profile showed that both the Canal and Marin City communities were officially defined as “Food Deserts”.

Overall Plan for the Canal area of Marin 2008-2011:

In March 2008, using the results of the data collected, the Nutrition Wellness program partnered with Canal Alliance Program in a successful application of a three year grant to develop a Promotoras nutrition education program and provide economic incentives to increase healthy food options in the Canal. As an outcome, Promotoras were trained to provide nutrition education outreach to community residents in their homes. In May, 2010, the Marin CX³ community project was convened to bring together more community partners with an interest in improving access to healthy foods and safe walkable neighborhoods. The group’s initial task was to identify priority needs and opportunities that would yield the greatest impact. The consensus was that improving access to healthy foods at retail stores was the highest priority and a task that the Canal community was prepared to tackle. With this goal in mind, the *CX³ group* developed a plan of action. The plan and allied interventions included engaging the community at three key levels: 1) Developing partnerships and providing education and materials to four pilot retail stores in the Canal; 2) Developing partnerships and providing education and materials to key Canal community organizations; and 3) Engaging the Canal community families via classes, marketing efforts and shopping tours. Led by the MDHHS Nutrition Wellness Program, effective implementation and progress of the plan is monitored by the *Community CX³ Group* who meet regularly to discuss progress, provide feedback, and incorporate suggestions from the community partners. In May 2012, a full re-assessment, using updated GIS and field study methods, is planned to re-assess the needs and assets of the county, as well as evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the interventions completed in the Canal Area. However, a first year re-score of changes in the community, already shows an impact and promising results.

* Low Income = ≤ 185% FPL (based on USDA CalFresh Guidelines)

Interventions and Activities Conducted 2010-2011:

- Pilot efforts to update field study findings from 2007 for four retail food stores.
- Trainings provided to Retail Food Stores in partnership with the Network for a Healthy California's Retail Specialist. Product placement, posters, flyers, store "wobblers" and other media materials were provided as well as hosted store events and cooking demos.
- Implementation of key social marketing messages: "Eat Right when Money is Tight" and "We Speak up for Healthy Changes."
- Placement and dissemination of key social marketing messages in the Canal Neighborhood via retail food stores, community agencies, schools, community centers, parks, etc.
- Direct education to resident families by the DHHS Nutrition Wellness Program via monthly classes, store tours, etc. at the retail food stores and at the Health and Wellness Campus.
- Regular meetings with the CX³ community partners at the Marin Health and Wellness Campus to discuss progress and incorporate suggestions.
- Data collection and ongoing observations about walkability.



It was observed that residents were using bikes as means of transportation however there was a lack of infrastructure to support biking in the community: e.g. no bike racks at most of the stores, no bike lanes clearly painted in the pavement, and lack of driver courtesy with pedestrians and bikers. This situation did not change during the year we had our intervention. It was brought to the attention of our CX3 group and we all agreed to add this as an improvable for our next year's plan. On a positive note, the intersection at Bellam Blvd and Vista del Mar frequently used by families to cross and get access to a supermarket was properly signaled in the pavement during the year of the intervention. This is an improvement since our 2010 assessment when it was noted as a problem.

CX3 Community Education Event and Celebration

On May 7, 2011, a year later, the three different groups: community organizations and partners, community residents and the four retail food stores, all came together to culminate a year of activities and progress made by hosting the first annual "Community Picnic" at the Marin County Health and Wellness Campus. The event was co-hosted by MDHHS NWP and the Connection Center.



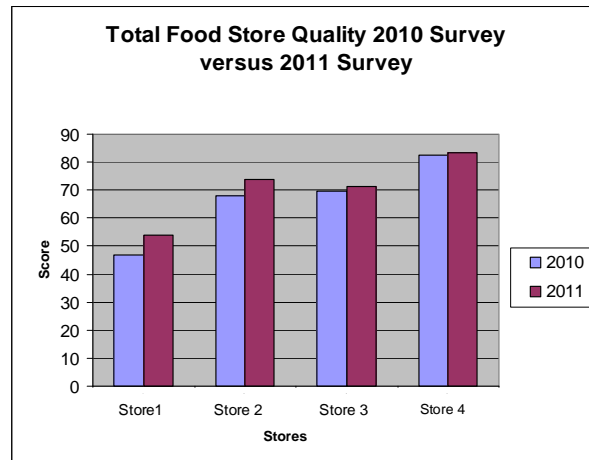
Nutrition Education at "Community Picnic"



Physical Activity and Nutrition Education at "Community Picnic"

Overall Achievements after one year:

1. *Improved Food Quality in all Pilot Stores* (7-8% positive increase in one store)



2. *Increased Sales*: Stores participating have reported positive changes in increasing fruit and vegetables sales.
3. *Improved Retail Marketing and Product Placement*: The retail stores demonstrated improvements in product placement of healthy foods and the marketing and displays of fresh fruit and vegetables, etc.



PRE-intervention



POST-intervention

4. *Increased outreach and education to community and families*-During our first year of intervention more than 3000 residents in the Canal community were contacted with our key messages about healthy options and 12 classes for families held.



CX³ Planning Meeting



Grocery Store Tour

5. *Increase in community participation* from 7 to over 15 agencies and 4 retail food stores.
6. *Convergence of Retail Stores, Community Agencies and Residents working together to improve the health of the community:* For the first time, a community event to celebrate combined efforts around healthy eating and active living was held on May 7, 2011 at the Health and Wellness Campus. More than 15 agencies and 400 families from the Canal attended this event.

What's Next?

Our Community Partners for this CX³ Project will meet September 22, 2011 to discuss the continuation of work begun in Marin around improving the food environment. We are inviting all of you that are interested in sustaining and growing these efforts to join us in this effort. Our vision is that representatives of the many areas for improvement will join forces in coming together for a Healthier Marin.

From this –to This!



“Food Desert” to a “Community of Excellence”!