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Using Local Resources to Build Strong, Healthy Families

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Climbing Obesity Rates in the United States

- Obesity rates continue to rise in the United States.
- Unfortunately income level impacts obesity prevalence.
- Among children ages 2-19, 31.8% are currently considered either overweight or obese.
  - Overweight in children is measured as a BMI at or above the 85th percentile. Obesity is measured as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile.
- Studies show that people with a lower income gravitate towards less healthy foods because they are less expensive, easier to prepare and are considered time effective.
Getting to Know Hardwick, Vermont

- 370 families (26% single parent households)
- 22.2% of the population falls under the poverty line
- 11.5% of preschool-elementary school children are obese
- Hardwick, Vermont is in the center of a fresh food mecca
- Hardwick has many resources for disadvantaged families
Local Leadership’s Impact

- Hardwick residents have risen up to take on some of these problems. However many are finding their resources are not being fully utilized.
- Hardwick Food Pantry and Ruby Dale Brown with Bethany Dunbar
- NEK on the Move and Katherine Ingram
- Hardwick Trails and Helen Beattie
- YATST and UP for Learning with Helen Beattie
Healthy Hardwick Families

- Through conversations with community leaders and parents of children presenting to the health center for well child visits, local healthy eating and lifestyle resources were identified.

- Local and Internet resources were highlighted on an accessible pamphlet promoting Healthy Hardwick Families.

- Though the parent discussions, a general understanding of need was established. Parents wanted help with getting their kids to reduce screen time, modify negative behaviors or help with household chores.

- Development of Activity Cards for ideas for outdoor and indoor healthy and family friendly activities.
  - These cards could be used to strengthen family bonds and provide alternatives to non-academic screen time.
Outcomes of the Healthy Hardwick Families Resources

- The Healthy Hardwick Families products were well received by providers and community members.
- The local AHEC branch is printing out 30 pamphlets and over 100 activity cards for the Hardwick Area Health Clinic.
- Healthy Hardwick Families posters will be hung in several public places to notify people about the availability of additional resources at the Hardwick Area Health Center.
- Future assessment of effectiveness will be seen in local program attendance.
- Another data point for effectiveness could be related to screen time statistics.
Evaluation of Effectiveness and Limitations

- Because there are no consolidated list of resources for disadvantaged or at risk families, the Healthy Hardwick Families pamphlet fills a much needed void.
  - The resources included in the pamphlet are not limited to the 370 families in Hardwick, but can be extended to families and individuals in the surrounding areas.
- Assessment of effectiveness is difficult as the current Hardwick Area Health Center EMR is not designed for extracting/sorting data.
- Families that would benefit most from the brochure are historically have the greatest rates of “no shows” for medical appointments.
  - Brochures or a short educational presentation could be administered to students at local schools.
- Assessing impact of project on children’s overall health is difficult secondary to long follow up times.
  - More frequent counseling or supportive interventions/meetings would help to motivate change.
Recommendations for Future Interventions and Projects

- Develop internet resource links for the Northern Counties Health Care, Inc. website
- Work to promote the Hardwick Area Food Pantry’s Grow Your Own program outside of the Healthy Hardwick Families products
- Survey population to identify needs/service gaps
  - Determine if services are already available or need to be developed
- Work with local schools to develop family fun nights and other interventions to promote healthy lifestyles
  - Past projects in Hardwick have worked to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles
References

1 “Relationship between poverty and overweight or obesity.” Food Research and Action Center. 31 October, 2014 http://frac.org


3 Fournier, Kate, et al. “Causes of Obesity” The University of Vermont and the Vermont Attorney General’s Office. 16 November, 2010

4 “Hardwick, Vermont.” City Data. 31 October, 2014 www.city-data.com