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Assessing Barriers to Healthy Living in Economically Challenged Communities of the Greater Winooski Area



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Introduction

NeighborKeepers (Winooski, VT) is a non-profit, anti-poverty organization that focuses on building supportive friend networks that direct families and individuals toward the resources they need to improve their health, get training and education, find jobs, and discover a sense of purpose and belonging. Keeping with the NeighborKeepers philosophy of giving those in need the tools to help improve their own circumstances, our project goals were to:

- Engage community members
- Connect individuals with community resources geared toward healthy living and improved healthcare access
- Identify health needs and potential areas for intervention or further inquiry



Methods

We organized a community health resource fair, "Community Health Connections," at the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski. In order to reach the larger NeighborKeepers community, we:

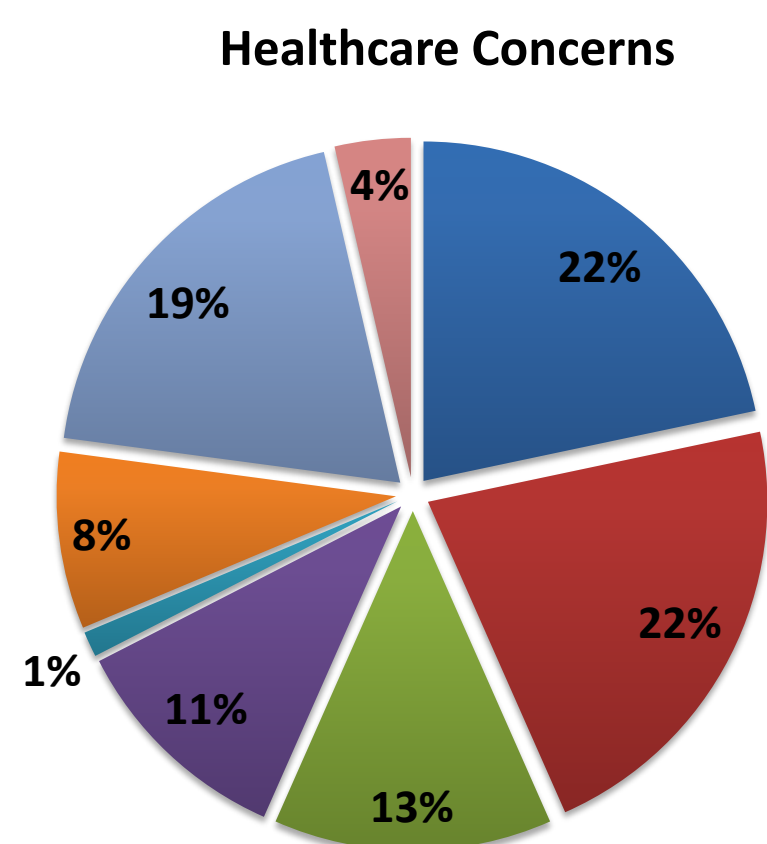
- Promoted the event at community dinners over several months
- Encouraged members to invite their friends and families
- Advertised through fliers posted around downtown Winooski

The survey administered at the fair was adapted from the Fletcher Allen 2007 Community Needs Assessment¹. Participants were asked to check up to 3 items in each of the 12 categories, covering health, wellness, and community concerns. We obtained a Nepalese translation for the Bhutanese population. As an incentive to complete the survey, we raffled off two \$25 gift certificates to City Market.

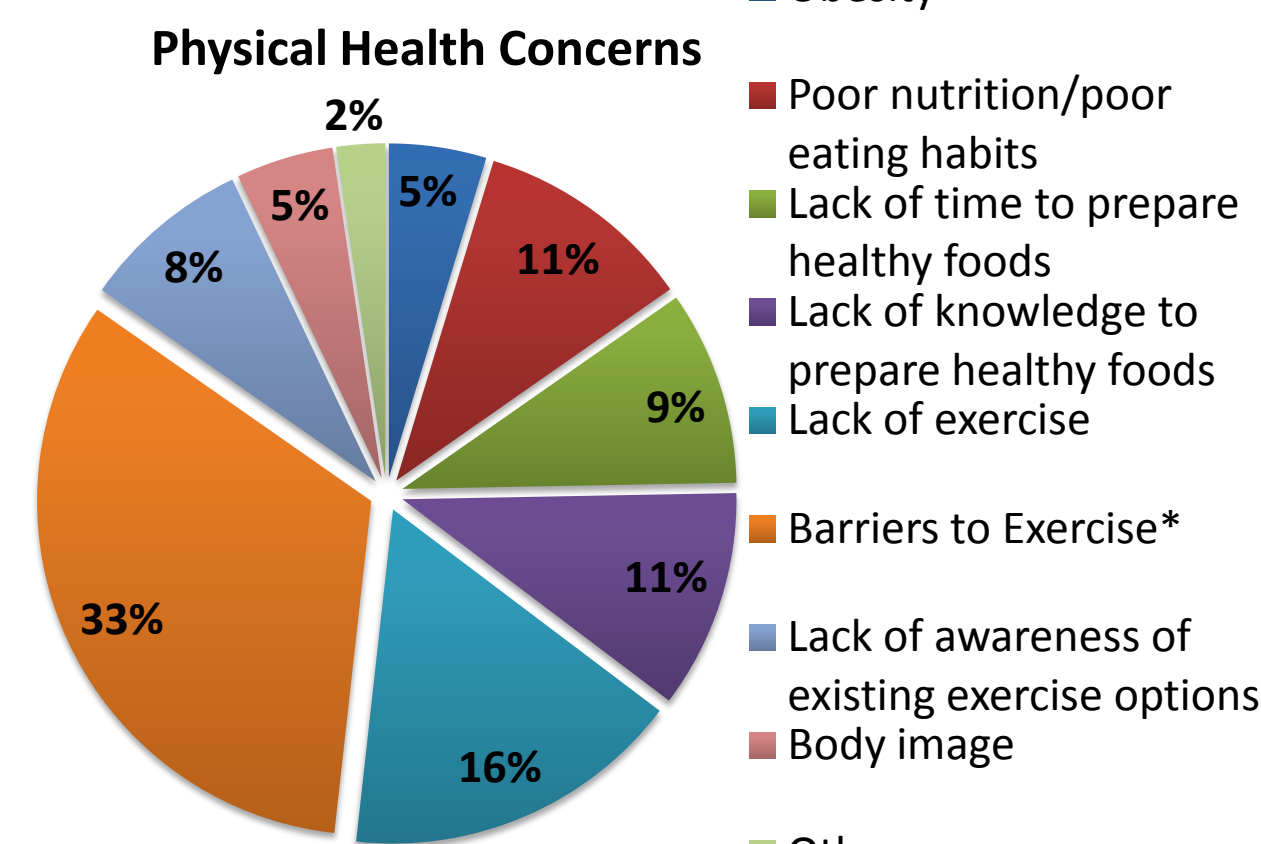
Gender	Percent
Male	61
Female	34
Age	Percent
18-34	52
34-59	36
60+	11

Race	Percent
White	36
Asian	52
African American	2
Native Hawaiian	2

General Health Perception	Percent
Excellent	21
Good	20
Fair	22
Poor	7
Total No. Participants	44

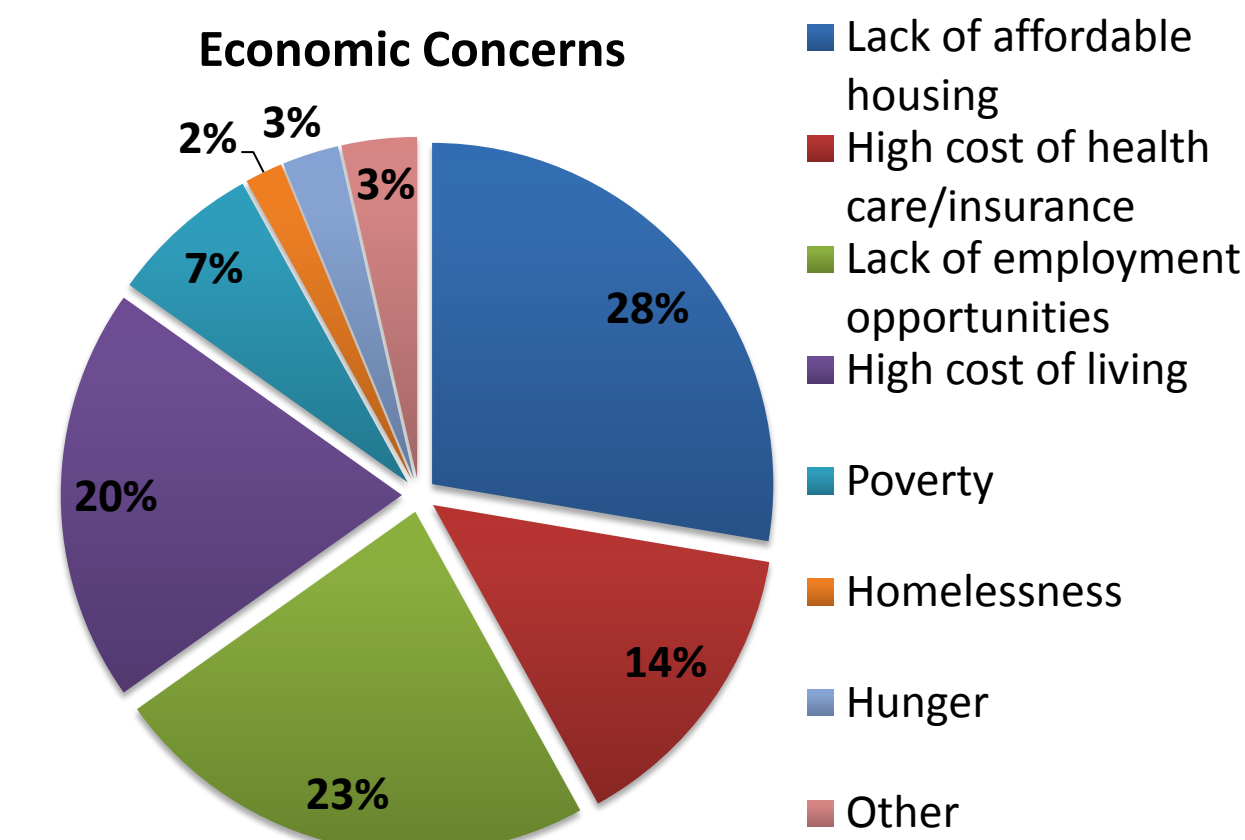


- Lack of insurance coverage
- High cost of health insurance
- High cost of prescription drugs
- Difficulty getting appointment
- Lack of doctors and nurses
- Lack of prevention programs/services
- Lack of dental/vision insurance
- Other

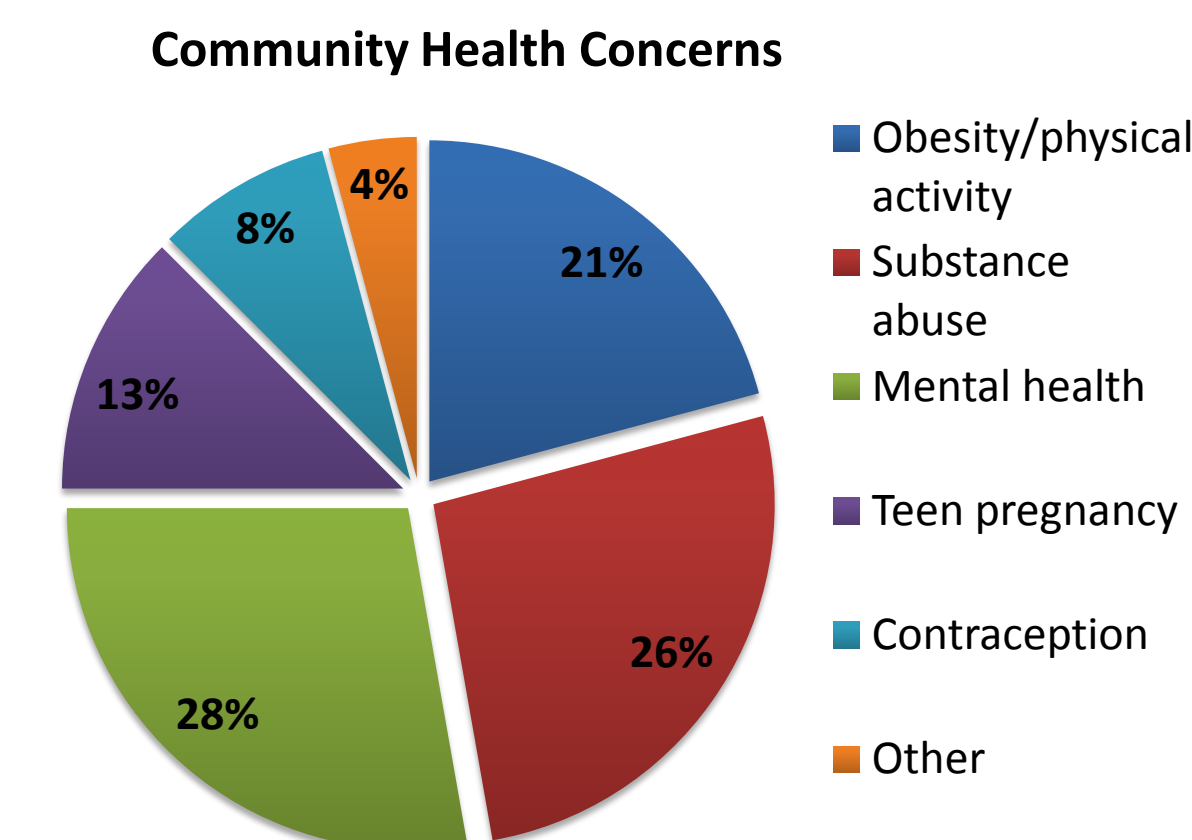


* high cost, lack of facilities, motivation, time, exercise options

- Obesity
- Poor nutrition/poor eating habits
- Lack of time to prepare healthy foods
- Lack of knowledge to prepare healthy foods
- Lack of exercise
- Barriers to Exercise*
- Lack of awareness of existing exercise options
- Body image
- Other



- Lack of affordable housing
- High cost of health care/insurance
- Lack of employment opportunities
- High cost of living
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Hunger
- Other



- Obesity/physical activity
- Substance abuse
- Mental health
- Teen pregnancy
- Contraception
- Other

Results

Attendance at the health fair was estimated at ~ 150 adults and children. The **data analysis** revealed specific concerns regarding health/vision/dental insurance (41%), high cost of health insurance (22%), lack of exercise (16%), barriers to exercise (41%), lack of affordable housing (28%), employment opportunities (23%), mental health (28%), and substance abuse (26%).

Discussion

- The VNA flu clinic was an enormous success - 108 adults and children received free flu shots.
- The large Bhutanese turnout (not necessarily representative of NeighborKeepers) may have been due in part to our prior involvement in health education outreach for their community.
- Advertising through online forums and electronic newsletters may be helpful for recruiting greater participation from community members.
- The length and complexity of the survey were barriers for both native and non-native English speakers.
- Language and literacy barriers made it difficult for Bhutanese participants to take full advantage of the resources available at the fair.



Lessons and Future Directions

- Overwhelming demand for flu shots suggests significant need for accessible, affordable clinics in Winooski.
- Flu clinics can be used as opportunities to provide health education in areas of concern for this community (e.g. physical activity, substance abuse, health care access).

Acknowledgements

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References

¹Community Assessment - Community Resources - Fletcher Allen. Fletcher Allen - Burlington, Vermont's University Hospital & Medical Center. Web. 12 Sept. 2010.