

WISEWOMAN Program Spotlight

Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Better Nutrition



COMMUNITY-CLINICAL LINKS



WISEWOMAN

The Vermont WISEWOMAN Program, known as Ladies First, is improving healthy food options for women with the goal of lowering their risk for heart disease and stroke. Farm to Family, an innovative program created through a partnership with the Vermont Department for Children and Families, provides WISEWOMAN participants with coupons to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables at more than 55 farmers' market locations across the state. The program increases access to healthy foods in order to support weight management and blood pressure control efforts.

Opportunity

On average, two women die from heart disease and stroke in Vermont each day. More than 49% of women in the state have overweight or obesity. Poor nutrition is a special concern for women who live in low-income neighborhoods where food deserts exist or where fresh produce is too expensive for their budget. One of the goals of Ladies First is to make it easier for women to purchase and incorporate healthy foods into their daily meals.

Solution

Offering coupons to WISEWOMAN participants for use at local farmers' markets helps bridge the gaps in access to healthy food and in the ability to afford produce they were not able to purchase at the grocery store. Working with local farmers also fosters a relationship in which participants feel comfortable talking about food. Women are also encouraged to start their own gardens at home and try healthy new recipes.

Results

During the first season of Farm to Family, 150 women were given coupons to use during the spring and summer months in 2015. Seventy-five percent of these women reported eating more fresh fruits and

vegetables. The women also made plans to continue healthier eating all year round. Fifty-six percent of the women report they now regularly purchase a fruit or vegetable they had previously never eaten.

Sustaining Success

Ladies First continues to expand Farm to Family by partnering with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont and its farmers and with the Vermont Tree Fruit Growers Association. As a result, the program now includes an apple-picking component to emphasize healthy eating during the fall months. Women can redeem their coupons to receive a half-bushel of apples at any of Vermont's 25 apple orchards.

"It was fun trying produce that I don't ordinarily purchase at the grocery store. Plus, the farmers' market gave me the motivation and excitement to experiment with new recipes. The people at the booths were extremely helpful. They even gave me tips for starting my own veggie garden."

—D.T., Vermont WISEWOMAN participant

Additional Information

For more information about Vermont WISEWOMAN, visit the Ladies First program at <http://ladiesfirst.vermont.gov/providers/ladies-first-services>.