



Faithful Families Eating Smart and Moving More: The role of faith communities in improving community health*

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Demonstrating Need

- More than 83% of American adults are affiliated with a faith tradition (Pew Forum 2008)
- Over 62.8 % of North Carolinians are overweight or obese

Project Overview

- Faithful Families (FF), a collaborative project between NC Cooperative Extension and the NC Division of Public Health, is based on the socio-ecological, or multi-level model of behavior change:
 - Individual
 - Tools for individual use—handouts, posters, recipes, interactive CDs.
 - Family
 - Series of 9 lessons delivered to person in family who prepares food and buys groceries (topics include: planning, buying and preparing healthy foods; physical activity; food safety; budgeting).
 - Organizational
 - Each faith community conducts health assessments to determine policy and environmental changes that are needed.
 - FF Resource Guide created to give faith community an active role in promoting, enacting and sustaining policy and environmental changes.
 - Community
 - Faith communities have created and joined county-level partnerships to connect local partners working toward sustainable county-level policy and environment change.

Project Results

- Over 35 faith communities in seven counties have participated in the program.
- Over 350 individuals have completed the nine lesson education series. Positive behavior changes include: 88% improved food resource management skills; 65% improved in food safety practices; 66% used food labels to make food choices more often; 48% increased consumption of calcium rich foods; 46% increased vegetable consumption; 49% increased fruit consumption; 30% of participants increased the amount of physical activity.
- Over 85 policy and environmental changes have been implemented. These include: serving fruits, vegetables, water at events; creating walking maps and routes on faith community grounds; opening physical activity facilities to public; creating community gardens.
- Qualitative evaluation demonstrates that lay leaders play an active role in program delivery and encouraging policy and environment change. Additionally, participants appreciate that this program is not a “diet program,” but that it promote lifestyle change.

Moving Forward

- Partnership at multiple levels (state, county, in each faith community) is important to ensure program success
- When connecting faith and health, Faithful Families uses open-ended questions led by lay-leaders to encourage participants to make connections between religion/spirituality and physical activity and nutrition behaviors and community changes. They explored health as a holistic endeavor that integrates the whole self: mind, body, spirit.
- Community change and genuine partnership takes time – but the time is well worth the investment!

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For more on Faithful Families, visit: <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/FaithfulFamilies/FaithfulFamilies.html> or contact David Hall at david_hall@ncsu.edu or 919-515-1788.