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Value of Good Foods for Good Health Community Partnership

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Value of Good Foods for Good Health Community Partnership

Abstract

County partnerships are always an asset to Extension but can be especially important during challenging budget times. During these times, partnerships with the local Parks and Recreation Department, and county General Health District have made offering monthly Good Foods for Good Health programs possible. These programs emphasize healthy food choices and safe food handling practices. Determining the dollar value of these partnerships provides valuable information to share with stakeholders and illustrates how all partners involved benefit when we work together instead of in competition with each other.

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Introduction

What would it cost per person to attend a food and nutrition program that includes discussion of a current nutrition topic, food demonstrations, taste testing, and printed resources, if the agency providing the program had to rent a facility, pay an instructor, and purchase all supplies? Creative community partnerships can enable Extension to offer a program like this and keep the cost to participants reasonable. Determining the dollar value of these partnerships can provide valuable information for stakeholders.

Background

Five years ago the director of a city Parks and Recreation Department called the local Ohio State University (OSU) Extension office and asked if anyone could teach a BBQ class. It was explained that Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) programs and outreach provided by Extension need to have a nutrition and food safety emphasis, not just cover how to BBQ. The director agreed, and the class was a huge success.

Since then, the Parks and Recreation Department has occasionally asked for additional classes, and a few have been offered on an irregular schedule. The classes have been very popular, and a regular audience has been established.

In 2003, the county General Health District approached Extension about being involved with the Cardiovascular Health (CVH) Project. This program, funded through the Ohio Department of Health, addresses the high rate of heart disease. OSU Extension subcontracted with the General Health District to coordinate the project.

The idea to offer a regular monthly class was suggested after OSU Extension took over coordination of the CVH project, recognizing the opportunity to connect the food programs with prevention of heart disease. This fit well with the programming direction the Parks and Recreation Department was taking and their mission, which states: "Our mission is to improve the quality of life for all residents, providing a wide variety of enriching recreation and leisure opportunities, facilities and services." The department was trying to offer more quality of life and wellness programs.

This opportunity also fit well with the mission of Ohio State University Extension and FCS Strategic

Plan. The programs allow an opportunity to offer education emphasizing nutritious food choices, healthy food preparation techniques, and safe food handling practices.

A win-win partnership was created that met the needs of OSU Extension, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the General Health District.

Program Development

An umbrella title, Good Foods for Good Health, was created for the programs. The title would be consistent and recognizable in the community. Topics are selected based on participant suggestions and feedback, seasonal foods, and current developments in nutrition and food safety.

A 6-month schedule of programs is planned and publicized in the Parks and Recreation Department program guide.

Programs include a foods demonstration related to the monthly topic along with a nutrition component and food safety component. Resource materials are developed and compiled each month related to the current topic.

The classes meet from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at the Club House owned by the Parks and Recreation Department. This facility has a kitchen, including range, refrigerator, sink, and microwave. Participants pay \$6.00 for each class, which covers the cost of consumable supplies and resource materials. It does not cover the cost of facilities or the FCS educator's time and travel.

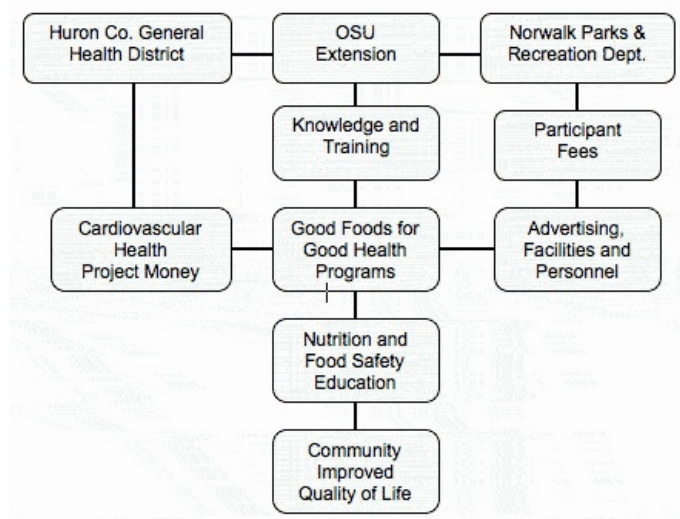
Community Partnership

The Good Foods for Good Health programs are only possible through the community partnerships OSU Extension has established with county agencies. Community partnerships have always been a strength of OSU Extension in the county, especially in the Family and Consumer Sciences program area.

Extension in Ohio has been experiencing budget cuts at both the state and local level recently. Extension professionals are being challenged to think outside the box when it comes to organizing and financing programs. Generally, we think in terms of direct dollars from grants, contracts, or other cost-recovery measures.

Just what is the value of the Good Foods for Good Health partnership to the program and agencies involved? Quantifying the contribution helps put the importance of this partnership in perspective. The structure of this partnership is illustrated in Figure 1. An explanation of what each member of the partnership brings to the table follows.

Figure 1.
Good Foods for Good Health Community Partnership



OSU Extension

- Knowledge in foods and nutrition
- Knowledge in food safety
- Resources related to nutrition and food safety
- Expertise in program development and teaching
- Expertise in organizing programs

Norwalk Parks and Recreation Department

- Advertising by publishing a Program Guide every 6 months that is distributed to thousands of people. The estimated dollar value is \$415.
- Facilities, including the Club House, which is normally rented to outside groups. The estimated annual value is \$1,500.
- Personnel time for those who handle registration for the classes and set up and clean up at the Club House for each class. The estimated annual value is \$3,656.
- Total estimated annual dollar value of the contribution of the Parks and Recreation Department is \$5,565.

Huron County General Health District

- Subcontract with OSU Extension for the CVH project.
- Cover the Extension Educator's time and travel to prepare for and teach the Good Foods for Good Health classes.
- Annual value estimated is \$5,000.

Summary and Conclusions

Each member of a partnership brings individual contributions to the table. The Good Foods for Good Health programs would not be possible without the contributions of the community partners involved. With the total cost over \$10,500 per year and an average of 260 people attending, OSU Extension would have to charge \$40 or more per person to recover costs without this partnership. It is not likely that participants would regularly pay that amount.

Often partnerships do not involve the exchange of money, but a dollar value can be attached to the contributions. Quantifying these contributions can often reveal surprising figures. Reporting these figures to stakeholders is important in establishing support for programs. County Commissioners were surprised and impressed by the creative partnership established and the value it has for the community.

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