

Using a Community Food Assessment to identify opportunities to improve health in Eastern Oregon

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: improving health through greater access and use of fruits & vegetables/social and health service providers

ABSTRACT: In the 2017 County Health Rankings Union and Baker counties ranked 22 and 23 out of 36 for Health Outcomes and fell below the state average Food Environment Index by over one full point. In 2016-2017 we conducted a Community Food Assessment (CFA) to identify barriers and opportunities to developing a stronger regional food system to improve community health and vitality. Oregon Food Bank provided support for a RARE AmeriCorps Member to conduct the CFA in collaboration with Oregon State University Extension Family & Community Health and community partners. The assessment is a community-based process that produces an action plan. Based on the FEAST (Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together) discussions, interviews, and surveys that were part of the data gathering process for the CFA, participants were eager to begin working on improving access to and consumption of healthy foods. Local organizations and individuals are interested in supporting a six-week Cooking Matters series to help families learn to shop and cook healthy meals on a budget, establishing a Veggie Rx program that allows doctors to “prescribe” vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables, and expanding community “Grow-a- Row” programs to provide produce for local food banks.

OBJECTIVE(S):

- Explain the purpose and process for conducting a Community Food Assessment.
- Identify barriers to a healthy food system including availability and affordability of food as well as issues related to transportation, employment, housing, health care, and health conditions.
- Describe programs or activities that are helping to improve family health and reduce food insecurity by providing more access to fruits and vegetables, and teaching skills for preparing healthier meals on a budget.

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