

Establishing Mobile Markets in Food Deserts in Salt Lake County

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An Integrative Service Project Summary Submitted to the University of Utah in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Service-Learning Scholar's Program through the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center

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Table of Contents:

Abstract.....3
Review of Literature..... 3
Procedure.....5
Results.....8
Reflection.....9
Appendix.....10
Resources15

Abstract

BACKGROUND: There are areas in our communities, both rural and urban, which do not have access to affordable, healthy food. These areas are called food deserts. There is not a specific definition of what a food desert is, but the general concept is the same throughout the research that is being conducted. Guthman (2008) states that the term food deserts is used to describe urban environments where few, if any, venues provide an array of healthful fruits, vegetables, meats, and grain products, but instead sell snack foods and highly processed ready-to-eat meals. Having access to affordable healthy food can have implications on your health.

METHODS: In order to address this issue, the Community Food Co-op of Utah decided to establish Mobile Markets to break down some of the perceived barriers to their traditional co-op model and also bring fresh, affordable produce and meat into low income neighborhoods classified as food deserts. This will be accomplished through the creation of about four to five coalition partners located geographically near each other, to come together, bring awareness and sponsor a Mobile Market site.

RESULTS: Due to some complications experienced by the Community Food Co-op of Utah, that prevented that project's completion by the initial deadline, the process is on-going to establish these sites. The goal is to have all five markets set up by the end of summer 2010. To date one, out of the potential 5, Mobile Market site nearly established,.

Review of Literature

Access to affordable and healthy food can be challenging, especially for low income families. There are many contributors to a person's ability to access healthy food. Some of these obstacles are cost, transportation, availability, and preference. This is a challenge that is

slowly gaining more awareness. Areas called food deserts are districts where food is non-existent, not healthy, or too expensive. It is an issue of access and can be defined by distance and/or transportation being obstacles in obtaining adequate amounts of healthy foods (Shaw, 2004)

Because this concept is relatively new one, little research has been conducted and there is not one specific definition of what comprises a food desert. Is it a place where there are no large chain grocery stores? Or a place where there are no stores at all and you are only able to purchase food from a convenience store. Alternatively, a food desert could be an area where the only place to eat is a fast food restaurant. The latter of the two are assumed to offer little or no produce, or other healthy food at affordable prices. Kowaleski-Jones & colleges (2009) address the issue of the inconsistency of the locations of food deserts based on the data sets and definitions used. It is important to realize, however, is that food deserts are located in both rural and urban areas, in every state in our nation. They also reach across the socioeconomic lines, and can be found in neighborhoods of most income levels. However, higher income areas typically do not have the transportation barriers that lower income neighborhoods do, and thus typically are not thought of as food deserts.

Another impact of food deserts that is prevalent in the research being conducted is the connection to health concerns, primarily obesity. This research is being conducted to analyze the impact of the lack of whole, nutritious food, and the prevalence of “ready to eat” snack foods that are- high in fat, sodium, and sugar. They are missing out on the essential vitamins and other nutrients needed for a healthy life. The implications these food deserts take on the health of the people living in these areas, can be quite detrimental. The food they have access to can result in obesity, which can cause cancer, diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases.

Procedure

This Integrative Service Project (ISP) was conducted in conjunction with the Community Food Co-op of Utah, a project of Crossroads Urban Center. Trever Bruhn, was the primary contact at the Food Co-op, and was serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA during the duration of the project. The Community Food Co-op of Utah strives to provide quality, healthy food at a substantial savings through cooperative purchasing. However, the organization realized there were many perceived barriers for their target population, preventing them from participating in the traditional Co-op sites. Traditional sites require purchasing “shares” of either produce, meat, or both two weeks before they are able to pick up the food. Since the items change monthly, you do not know what items you will receive in your share until a few days before your scheduled monthly pick up.

The Community Food Co-op of Utah was established to provide quality food to participants at up to 50 percent off regular grocery store prices. While the Co-op is open to anyone who would like to join, the organization noticed they were not receiving as much participation as they would like from their target populations. The Co-op wanted to increase their access to low income families, food stamp or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Access Program) participants, and people who were located in food deserts. In order to reach those populations the organization had to first create a supplemental program to their traditional co-op structure. The Co-op decided to develop a Mobile Market system to serve the community’s food deserts as identified five sites within Utah’s Salt Lake County, the initial test area.

The Co-op’s first step was to identify the barriers prohibiting people from participating in the traditional co-op structure. Barriers to utilizing the traditional model include, but are not

limited to: pre-ordering the share; and not receiving the food until two weeks later; having to purchase the food in “shares”, a pre selected group of items; diet restrictions from being able to purchase the meat share- which usually contains beef and pork; the requirement of members to complete community service hours; the order deadlines; language barriers; and transportation to and from the pickup site.

The concept of creating Mobile Markets to help break down those barriers evolved from a trip Trever Bruhn and a Co-op Board Member, Dick Thompson, took to visit two existing Mobile Markets located in different states. Upon return from their trip a committee was created to bring staff, board and community members together to create the Mobile Market. Once the committee was established, its first task to be accomplished was to decide the definition of a food desert, and to locate those within the Salt Lake County. Once those were located, the committee was able to comprise a list of potential Mobile Market Coalition partners. Instead of having one organization as the site, like in the traditional model, it was decided to have a group of four or five different organizations located geographically close to each other, to collaborate, coordinate, promote and support the effort by contributing a couple volunteers each month to help run the Mobile Market.

The Mobile Market would be established as a “cash and carry” program. People would be able to come to the market and pick out items a la carte, pay for them on site - using cash, debit/credit cards as well as using their SNAP benefits with their Horizon Card, and then take the food home right then. The Mobile Markets would also be located in areas that were easily accessible to many modes of transportation, including walking. At the start the Mobile Market would open for a few hours, typically in the afternoon, once a month per site. The Mobile Market would operate throughout the week in between the monthly distribution days. This would enable

current participating co-op members to also participate in the Mobile Market, if they would like.

My main role was to participate on the advisory board that designed the program. I participated in making all the decisions that were made along the way. It was important to the Community Food Co-op of Utah to have input from community members on this pilot program. As a community representative, I was able to vote and have an impact on the decisions being made along the way during weekly meetings. Also, while participating on the advisory board I took the research that Dr. Lori Kowaleski-Jones had done identifying food deserts within Salt Lake County in census block groups, and translated that into physical street addresses and located 6 food desert areas. Once I had located the general areas, I was then able to start identifying potential coalition partners, and other organizations that could influence the Mobile Market. This was done by searching through Google Maps in the satellite view. Locations of existing traditional sites were also taken into consideration. The initial identified areas were: Hunter, Rose Park, Glendale (which would benefit the Warehouse Sale that was also being created during this time), the University of Utah, South Salt Lake City, and South Jordan. The Warehouse Sale currently takes place the Monday after the traditional co-op distribution Saturday. It is a way for the community to purchase remaining items a la carte, and was also used as a learning experience for the Mobile Market. Once those areas were located, I was able to find the potential coalition partners for each site. Typically the potential partners were schools, libraries, public health centers, religious organizations, recreation centers, and senior centers. Locations of traditional co-op sites were taken into consideration, when locating new potential partners.

Once the potential sites were located the advisory board was then able to take the Mobile Market Manual that was developed by the committee and start approaching different

organizations, with the goal to locate specific market sites. There would be one organization that would act as the site for the Mobile Market on a monthly basis, and the others would act as a support. It was important to have the main site location on board with the project before recruiting the other organizations. Potential sites were contacted by several means and attempts, the process to recruit partners are currently ongoing.

Results

The Community Food Co-op of Utah acquired a truck to help transport the food to and from the Mobile Market sites. However, due to some internal complications, they were unable to secure an industrial sized refrigerator to store the produce. This complication delayed the initial timeline for establishing the Mobile Markets and the project has not yet been complete. As a result, the Co-op has put the Mobile Market project on hold. However, the organization is taking advantage of this delay to actively recruit more organizations to become coalition sites and their new goal is to have all five Mobile Markets running by the end of summer of 2010. During this process the Co-op was able to secure a host site, and created partnerships near/at the University of Utah site, including but not limited to Rowland Hall School, Saint Catherine of Sienna Catholic Newman Center, and the Married Student Housing at the University of Utah. The sites that I participated in approaching all seemed to encourage the project and were positive about participating. I will continue to work on with this project past graduation in order to get the Mobile Markets established during the summer. This project will be sustainable through becoming a project within an existing organization that is dedicated to the mission of the project. Also, to ensure the sustainability of the project, maps and lists of community partners and their locations will be given to the Community Food Co-op of Utah for their further review.

Reflection

At first I had a hard time locating a potential project to work on for my ISP. But, thankfully the opportunity to work with the Community Food Co-op of Utah presented itself. I'm very grateful for this experience and I gained a lot from it. I also know that I played a valuable role with the development of the Mobile Market. This project forced me to challenge myself and take the concept of a food desert, which I had only briefly heard of before, and educate myself on the topic. While I had done a lot of work with hunger and food insecurity in the past, I feel that this project really was the capstone of all those experiences. This experience helped me to move past just understanding *why* knowing about food deserts is important, but moving towards the *how* we can make a difference. I feel as though through this project I was able to challenge myself, use my problem solving skills, add my input, thoughts and ideas, and really help to develop a program that will be as inclusive as possible and benefit people that the traditional sites have not been able to reach.

I feel as though as with any time you are starting to develop a program, you run into bumps in the road. This project, was not exempt from that, but offered many more learning experiences for me. I was able to understand more about non-profits, and how they function, and the limitations that we run into.

Appendix

Hunter: 3500 South-4700 South; 5600 West- Bangerter Highway

Closest Traditional Sites:

Magna Recreation Center (3270 South, 8400 West); Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church (8585 W 3010 S); Westvale Presbyterian Church (3610 South 4400 West)

Possible Partners:

Grace Baptist Church
4737 West 4100 South
West Valley City, UT
(801) 968-4843

Hunter Library
4740 West 4100 South
West Valley City, 84120
801-944-7593

Hunter High School
4200 S 5600 W
Salt Lake City, UT 84120
(801) 646-5360

Ellis R. Shipp Public Health Center
4535 South 5600 West
West Valley City, Utah 84120

Jackling Elementary
3760 South 4610 West
West Valley City, UT 84120
385-646-4882

Farnsworth Elementary
3751 Sunnyvale Drive
West Valley, UT 84120
801-646-4822

Kearns Senior Center
4851 West 4715 South
801-965-9183

Winder Dairy
4400 West 4100 South
West Valley, UT 84120-5099
(801) 224-8686

Rose Park: 1000 N to North Temple; 2000 West to Redwood Road

Closest traditional Sites: James Russell Head Start (1240 N American Beauty Dr (1040 West)

Possible Partners:

Rose Park Elementary School
1105 West 1000 North
Salt Lake City, UT 84116
801-578-8554

Newman Elementary School
1269 North Colorado St.

Salt Lake City, UT 84116
801-578-8537

Backman Elementary School
601 North 1500 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84116-2500
(801) 578-8100

Escalante Elementary
1810 West 900 North
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116
578-8496

Northwest Center
1300 West 300 North
Salt Lake City, UT 84116-3232
(801) 596-0072

Day Riverside Library
1575 West 1000 North,
Salt Lake City
(801) 594-8632

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church
715 West 300 North
Salt Lake City, UT 84116
801-364-2019

Glendale/Warehouse: (Indiana Ave- 1700 South, 1700 West- 700 West)
Closest Traditional Sites: The warehouse, Dream Center (1624 South 1000 West), Oasis
Vineyard Church (1945 South Redwood Road)

Possible Partners:

Riley School- Contat-Kristy Poulsen?
1410 South 800 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84104
801-974-8310

Glendale Middle School
1400 W Goodwin Ave
Salt Lake City, UT 84116
(801) 974-8320

Salt Lake CAP Head Start
1307 South 900 West
Salt Lake City, UT 84104-1622
(801) 972-2337

Neighborhood House
1050 West 500 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84104
(801) 363-4589

Sorenson Multicultural Center
855 California Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84104-1632
(801) 974-2420

Boys and Girls Club of Greater Salt Lake
Lied Club
460 South Concord Street (1235 West)
Salt Lake City, UT 84104
Phone: (801) 364-9118

Parkview Elementary School
970 Emery Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84104
(801) 974-8304

Chapman Library
577 S 900 W
Salt Lake City, UT 84104
(801) 594-8623

University of Utah:

Closest Traditional Sites: U of U Family Student Housing (West Community Center; First Unitarian Church (569 South 1300 East)

Possible Partners:

Salt Lake City Sports Complex
650 Guardsman Way Salt Lake City, UT
84112

(801) 583-9713

Rowland Hall St. Marks School

720 Guardsman Way, Salt Lake City

(801) 355-7485

St. Catherine of Siena Newman Center

170 University Street, Salt Lake City UT
84102

801-359-6066

Friendship Manor

1320 East 500 South

Salt Lake City, UT 84102

(801) 582-3100

First Baptist *Church of* Salt Lake City

777 South 1300 East,

Salt Lake City

(801) 582-4921

Current Site:

Traditional Site:

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

4501 W. 5215 S.

Kearns, Utah 84118

Possible Partners

Children's Center

5242 South 4820 West

Kearns, UT 84118-6422

(801) 966-4251

www.tccslc.org

Oquirrh Park Fitness Center

www.kopfc.com

5624 Cougar Lane

Kearns, UT 84118-6055

(801) 966-5555

Kearns High School

5525 Cougar Lane

Salt Lake City, UT 84118-5599

(801) 646-5380

Beehive School

5655 South 5220 West

Kearns, UT 84118-7598

(801) 964-7930

South Kearns Elementary School

4430 West 5570 South

Kearns, UT 84118

801-646-5026

Intermountain Baptist Church

www.intermountainbaptist.org

4770 S 1950 W

Kearns, UT 84118-1133

(801) 969-1593

Oquirrh Hills Elementary School
5241 South 4280 West
Kearns, UT 84118
(801)- 646-4948

David Gourley Elementary School
4905 South 4300 West
Kearns, UT 84118
801-646-4846

Kearns Library
www.slco.lib.ut.us
5350 South 4220 West
Kearns, UT 84118
(801) 944-7612

South Salt Lake:

Closest Traditional Sites: Centenary Methodist: 1740 South 500 East: Salt Lake City, Utah 84105-2930

Possible Partners:

Christus Marian Center
www.stjosephvilla.com
451 Bishop Federal Lane
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
(801) 487-7557

Adult & Child Day Center
451 Bishop Federal Lane
Salt Lake City, UT 84115-2357
(801) 487-2450

Salt Lake County Aging Services
Salt Lake County Government Center
2001 South State Street S1500
SLC, Utah 84190-3050
801 468-2454

OC Tanner
www.octanner.com
1930 South State Street,
Salt Lake City
(801) 486-2430

St Ann's Church
450 East 2100 South
Salt Lake City, UT 84115-2238
(801) 487-1000

Hser Ner Moo Refugee Community
479E 2250S
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
Phone: 801-466-3238

Salt Lake Community College-Skills Center
www.slcc.edu
1575 South State Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84115
(801) 957-3354

Whittier School
www.whittier.sl.c.k12.ut.us
1600 South 300 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84115-1704
(801) 481-4846

Hawthorne School
www.hawthorne.sl.c.k12.ut.us
1675 South 600 East
Salt Lake City, UT 84105-2069
(801) 481-4824

South Jordan

Bountiful Baskets Site: 4022 W South Jordan Pkwy - South Jordan Fire Station #62

Our Closest Traditional Sites:

Adventure Church : 352 W 12300 S; Draper, Utah 84020

Mountain Vista United Methodist: 8931 S 3200 W; West Jordan, Utah 84088

Hilltop Methodist Church: 985 East 10600 South, Sandy, Utah 84094-4402

Potential Partners:

Marv Jensen Recreation Center

10300 South Redwood Road, South Jordan
801-253-4404

South Jordan Rec Center

1600 W. Towne Center Dr. (10610 S.),
South Jordan, Utah 84095 (801)-254-3742

South Jordan Senior Citizens Center

10778 South Redwood Road,
South Jordan, UT (801) 302-1222

South Jordan Elementary (Year-round)

11205 S. Black Cherry Way,
South Jordan, UT 84095
801-254-8000

<http://www.jordandistrict.org/schools/elementary/southjordan/index.htm>

South Jordan Library

www.slco.lib.ut.us
10673 South Redwood Road
South Jordan, UT 84095-2481
(801) 944-7634

Elk Ridge Middle School

3649 West 9800 South
South Jordan, UT
(801) 412-2800

Bingham High School

2160 West South Jordan Parkway,
South Jordan, UT (801) 256-5100

South Jordan Middle School

10245 South 2700 West,
South Jordan, UT (801) 412-2900

Mountain Heritage Academy

1350 West 10400 South
South Jordan, UT 84095
(801) 302-7248

South Jordan Community Church

10300 South Redwood Road,
South Jordan, UT (801) 253-4020

Adventist Church

738 West South Jordan Parkway,
South Jordan, UT (406) 557-2322

Hindu Temple Sri Ganesha

1142 West 10400 South,
South Jordan, UT (801) 254-9177

South Jordan Fire Department

10758 South Redwood Road,
South Jordan, UT (801) 254-0948

Daybreak Elementary

4544 Harvest Moon Drive
South Jordan, UT 84095
(801) 302-0553
www.daybreakliving.net

Resources

Guthman, Julie. (2008) Bringing Good Food to Others: Investigating the Subjects of Alternative Food Practice. *Cultural Geographies*, 431-447.

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Mead, Nathaniel M. (2008) Urban Issues: The Sprawl of Food deserts. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. Vol 116:8.

Shaw, Hillary. (2004). The Ecology of Food deserts, School of Geography, University of Leeds. Retrieved from <http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/projects/h.shaw/>