

REACHing for a Healthier Hawley



Kristin Krile, REACH's Director, shows an example of the "healthy item" signage provided by PS4H.

PartnerSHIP4Health Collaboration

Healthy foods, physical activity opportunities, and tobacco-free living contribute to a healthier community. In 2016, Rural Enrichment and Counseling Headquarters (REACH) in Hawley began collaborating with PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) to build community health.

The collaboration began with the local food pantry. REACH has been operating their food pantry since 1994. Food shelves, due to limited funding and capacity, as well as unhealthy food donations, find it challenging to offer healthy food choices as well as education about healthy food choices.

PS4H offered the REACH food pantry the support to make improvements encouraging healthy eating. REACH transitioned the pantry to a client-choice model, empowering clients to select the foods they would like instead of having those choices made for them. To complement this change, PS4H provided signage to identify healthier options, such as whole wheat pasta. REACH also added food models that display appropriate portion sizes of meats, vegetables, and other foods for children and adults.

In addition to encouraging healthy eating at the food shelf, REACH encourages healthy living through their backpack program for local students. REACH adds information promoting healthy eating and physical activity to each backpack. Besides addressing food and physical activity, REACH also addressed tobacco. REACH worked with PS4H to update their tobacco-free policy, signage, and tobacco cessation materials. With the number of REACH counseling hours increasing from 435 to 1,200 in a single year, the organization's impact on healthy living is rapidly growing as well.

Changes spark conversations and healthier choices

Kristin Krile, REACH's director, believes the collaboration has resulted in valuable improvements. "We always tried to incorporate healthy nutrition and nutrition education, but we didn't necessarily have access to all the resources and the time to devote to searching for recipes and printing them out, so I think that that has really helped us more efficiently provide nutrition education to the community." She notes that the food models are especially a hit with kids.

REACH's experience demonstrates that collaboration and simple changes can spark important conversations about how our daily food, activity, and tobacco choices make a difference in the long-term health of individuals, families, and communities.

Check out a short film featuring PartnerSHIP 4 Health's work with REACH and other food shelves at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Osc9vTGEg4>

Learn more about PartnerSHIP 4 Health's work in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail and Wilkin counties at

<http://partnership4health.org>

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