Healthy Congregations

Health Ministry Opportunities Overview
March 18, 2014

United Methodist Health Ministry Fund

• Philanthropy established 1986 by Kansas West Conference
• Endowment of approximately $58 million
• Based in Hutchinson, KS
• Provides resources to create change in selected health fields in Kansas

2014-2016 Fields of Work

• Ready for Life & Learning: Young Children’s Mental Health
• Fit for Kansas Kids: Young Children’s Healthy Lifestyles
• Open to All: Access to Health Care for all Kansans

Healthy Congregations
Now Open to the Great Plains Conference
Healthy Congregations Program Overview

• Goal: effective, intentional, wholistic health ministries
• Initial $1000 funding on signup
• Formation of Healthy Congregations Team
• Team training – seven core courses – 15 hours total
• Needs assessment planning tool
  • Tool utilized for 2015 work plan and then used at least once every three years.
• Annual work plan
• Annual report
• Annual $1000 renewal funding
• Networking and support
  • Quarterly learning community webinars
  • Special Healthy Congregations-only opportunities
  • Annual retreat
  • Resource website
  • Staff consultation and support

Healthy Congregations Retreat

• Ideas and information you can take home and use right away in your church
• Keynote: Rev. Dr. Ron Johnson
• Healthy Congregations Core training courses
• Relaxing, natural setting of Rock Springs, Junction City, KS
• April 25-26, 2014
• No cost to participate

Healthy Congregations Program Learning Community Webinar

Healthful Eating

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Agenda

• Why healthful food as a focus area?
• Programs, Practices, Policies and Environmental Changes
  • Why policy & environmental change?
    • Examples
    • Resources
  • The specific role of programs
    • New resources
  • Successes from Healthy Congregations Churches
Why healthful food as a focus area for congregations?

- Faith communities are powerful
  - source for health information
  - potential model for healthful living
  - gathering places for health education
- Clergy & congregants eat many meals and snacks in their faith communities and those are not always composed of healthful foods.

Why healthful food as a focus area?

- Faith community leaders influence the lives of their congregants in many areas, including health:
  - centers to their communities
  - clergy are widely respected
- Faith communities should be places where healthful eating is taught, modeled, & supported

What is a Policy
Why are Policies Important?

- **Policy**: regulation at the organizational level
- Policies can:
  - support healthy behaviors
  - lead to increased healthful eating by producing changes in environments
- Policies are [written rules](#)
  - Accountability
  - sustainability
- Practices ([unwritten policies](#)) are not as effective as written policies

What is a Policy
Why are Policies Important?

- Faith community policies influence their “culture”
  - Culture includes:
    - all of the habits, routines and conditions that characterize a specific faith community
    - the values, beliefs and attitudes that define what is important in that faith community
  - Culture is “how things are done around here”
    - What people bring to potlucks and snack breaks
    - Whether or not the clergy speaks about healthful eating in messages, sermons, or other talks
  - If the new culture of healthful foods is to be sustained over time, policy must be written
Example Food Policy: 
**Healthy Food Choices**

Effective (insert date), it is the policy of (insert faith community name) to offer healthful food choices, including fruits and vegetables, low-fat milk and dairy products, foods made from whole grains, and water at all meetings/events/celebrations where food is served. All members share the responsibility for encouraging people to observe this policy.


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Example Formal Food Policy: 
**Water Pitcher**

- **Because** our faith community is concerned about the health of our members and guests;
- **Because** people have become more and more interested in eating smart and moving more;
- **Because** cancer, heart disease and stroke—the top three causes of death in America are largely affected by what we eat and how physically active we are;
- **Because** foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and pastas, and low-fat dairy products are better choices for preventing many diseases;
- **Therefore**: Effective (insert date) it is the policy of (insert faith community name) that water will be served at all events or meetings where beverages are served and pitchers filled with water will be available for refills.


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Formal Policies

- **Formal policy:**
  - includes a statement of purpose
  - applies to all members.
- Formal policies are often preceded by informal policies or “practices”:
  - Offer healthful meals & beverages at meetings & events (Practice)
  - Written statement regarding what food and beverages will be offered at all meeting and events (Policy)

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Why Environmental Changes?

- **Environmental changes:**
  - changes to physical and social environments
  - provide new or improved supports for healthful behaviors
  - make the healthy choice the easy choice
  - An environment that supports healthful eating makes it easier to find, prepare and eat healthier meals and snacks – makes the healthful choice the easy choice.
Examples of Environmental Changes

• “The Big Garden” Community Gardening
  - A collaborative community food initiative which partners with schools, nonprofits, and churches to facilitate community building and increased access to healthful foods through the act of gardening.

http://www.gardenbig.org/

Example of Environmental Change

• “The Big Garden” Community Gardening
  - Initially funded by the USDA’s Community Food Project in Nebraska/Funded in Kansas by UMHMF
  - Environmental change to the physical environment that provides opportunities for increased access to healthful foods and opportunities for physical activity
  - Special opportunity for Healthy Congregations

http://www.gardenbig.org/

Example of Environmental Changes

• Farmers’ Market
  - Environmental change to the physical environment that brings easy access to locally grown, fresh fruits and vegetables into the neighborhood
    - Fresh fruits and vegetables are always good choices but are not always easily available or affordable
    - Work with local farmers in your area to set up an on-site farmer’s market
    - Easily available fruits and vegetables can encourage people to eat these healthy foods.
    - Why not tie a community garden to a local farmers’ market?


Web Resources for Food Policies & Environmental Changes

• Ideas can easily be adapted for faith communities with vending machines.

• http://www.ourcommunityourkids.org/domains--committees/community/faith-advisory-councils.aspx
  - Faith Communities as Community Space
  - Fresh Fruits & Vegetables at your Finger Tips: How to Start a Community Garden
  - Gleaning: Working Together for the Health of the Community
  - Ordering Farm Fresh Produce
  - Wellness Policy Template
  - Wellness Policy Implementation Tip Sheet

Web Resources for Food Policies & Environmental Changes

- [http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/resources/](http://www.hhs.gov/partnerships/resources/) Let’s Move Faith and Communities Clearinghouse of Best Practices and Resources:
  - Offers resources, community practices, curricula and other ideas that to help communities make healthful choices the easy choices!
  - Resources and community practices are organized by Wellness Leadership, Healthy Eating, Access to Healthy, Affordable Food, and Physical Activity.

Food, Social Justice & Environmental Concerns

Prayer:

I thank God for dirty dishes, they have a lot to tell

While others are going hungry, we’re doing pretty well

With food and faith and fellowship, we shouldn’t want to fuss

Because by this stack of evidence, you’ve been mighty good to us!

Rev. Drew Scott, Pastor, St. Matthews United Methodist Church, Turner Station, Maryland

Baltimore Food & Faith Project Focuses on Sustainable Food Systems/Environment & Social Justice


- Focuses on social justice and sustainable food supply/environment

Mission: To promote a just, healthy, and trustworthy food system with Baltimore faith communities

- The Good Food Toolkit: A Food Sustainability and Justice Evaluation for Faith Communities
- Growing Faith with Food: A Summer Camp Curriculum for Kids Aged 5 to 11 Years

New Healthy Congregations Elective – Pass on Pop: Soda Free Sundays

- Why sugar-sweetened drinks – why not candy and high-calorie foods?
  - Sugar-sweetened drink provide lots of calories but do not satisfy hunger.
  - Regular or diet soda consumption can make you crave more sweet foods.
- Why Sunday?
  - Just once a week is an easy way to improve overall health
  - Sunday is a good day to make changes as a family or community
  - When you realize how easy it is, you might decide to skip on other days as well!
- Sponsored by: Kansas Action for Children, Kansas Health Foundation, UMHM, other partners
Online PoP Toolkit

- Training video/narrated slides for faith communities
- PoP slide presentation for faith communities
- PoP FAQ
- Toolkits
  - For congregations
  - For families
  - For individuals

So should we NOT do Programs?

- Programs are important at the individual level
- Programs have the potential to:
  - increase knowledge and skills
  - change attitudes
  - provide social support for behavior change
  - build the basis of support for environmental and policy changes

**HOWEVER, knowledge by itself never changes behavior.**

Coming Soon – Program Electives

- You will be able to access resources whenever you want/need them
  - Narrated slide presentation
  - Slide set
  - Discussion guide
  - Other materials as appropriate
  - No “real-time” training

Coming Soon – Program Electives

- By April 15:
  - 28 food-centered programs
  - Arranged by meals
    - Narrated slide presentation
    - Leaders discussion guide
    - Most include additional handouts and/or easy, inexpensive, healthy, tested recipes

- By June 1:
  - Completely updated, previously developed, food-based electives (i.e., food safety, grocery shopping tips, healthful food for family, freezer and ministry, etc.)
    - Narrated slides
    - Discussion guide
    - Other handouts and resources, as needed
So what are some of our Healthy Congregations doing in the area of healthful eating?

Columbus UMC
Nickerson UMC
Emporia First UMC

What has the HC team done?

- Tried to educate families about healthful eating *(individual-level interventions)*
  - Found that making recipes available was a waste of resources
- Changed what is offered at church events *(environment and policy changes)*
  - Practice *(Informal Policy)*: Provide a healthful food choice at all church functions
  - Usually more than one healthful choice offered
    - Healthy Congregations team members provide the healthy item
    - Congregants with Diabetes provide desserts made with Splenda
- Monitor intake of healthful choices *(evaluation and data collection)* by observing and counting # of portions taken
  - 35%-50% of attendees take healthful choice

What did the HC team do?

- Practice *(Informal Policy)*: Provide healthful food choices at Vacation Bible School
  - Person that is in charge of the light supper works with HC team members to plan healthful meal for kids
    - vegetable sticks
    - fruit choices
    - no fried foods
- Monitored intake in 2013 *(evaluation and data collection)*
  - 25% ate vegetables
  - 40% ate fruit

Columbus, KS, is located in Cherokee County, Southeast Kansas

- Cherokee County is one of the poorest counties in Kansas
  - 20.1% of all living in Cherokee County live below the poverty level
  - 28.2% of children in Cherokee County lived below the poverty level in 2010
- Because of economic conditions, a lot of kids don’t learn healthful eating habits at home
- HC team leader – Teresa Amos
What will this HC team do next?

- **New Practice (Informal Policy) in 2014**: Provide only water and 100% fruit juice as beverages offered at VBS
  - Team will eliminate Kool-Aid-type beverages
  - Will not provide artificial sweeteners to kids
  - Will offer only water or 100% fruit juice

- **Consider making Practices/"Informal Policies" into formal written policies**
  - Need support of new pastor
  - Will need some additional education among congregation members

Nickerson UMC

- Located in Reno County near Hutchinson in south-central KS
  - Population ~ 1,000
  - 23.1% of residents had income below poverty level in 2009
  - 6.6% of residents has income below 50% of poverty level in 2009
  - Nickerson UMC weekly attendance 60-70
  - HC Team leader – Kathy Kittle

- **Wednesday Night Fellowship Dinner Desired Outcome (technically still called “Fried Chicken Dinner”):** Members of the community will be nourished physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally through food & fellowship

What does the HC Team do?

- Provides weekly meal, worship and occasional program for members of the community and congregants
  - Attendance 70-90 people from community & congregation weekly
  - Fried chicken used to be served weekly
  - More recently there is a practice (informal policy) among some who provide the meals to focus on including healthful foods
    - Different groups in the church take turns providing the meal, including youth group
    - Fruit and vegetable offerings have been increased
    - Water offered as beverage
    - Attendees are welcome to bring a covered dish if they want to
    - Free-will donation optional
    - Programs on a variety of topics offered

What does the HC Team do?

- Monthly “Cookie Sunday” - gather after church for homemade cookies and fellowship
  - Have started offering fresh vegetables, fruit, cheese & crackers too
  - Water offered as beverage at this and all events
What will the HC Team do next?

- Consider adopting written policies
  - Food served at all church events
  - Water as a beverage at all church events
  - Perhaps making only healthful food and beverage options available rather than only offering them as a choice
- Why?
  - Are the foods we eat and share within our religious institutions in line with the values we hold?
  - Can we better care for our neighbors through our food choices?
  - What we share with others matters.
- A written policy assures accountability and sustainability, but also requires some additional individual-level training for food providers

What will the HC Team do next?

- **Consider this policy:** Effective July 1, 2014, it is the policy of Nickerson United Methodist Church to offer healthful food choices, including fruits and vegetables, low-fat milk and dairy products, foods made from whole grains, and water at all meals and snacks served to our members and to our larger community. All members of our congregation share the responsibility for encouraging people to observe this policy.

Emporia First UMC

- Located in Lyon County in the Kansas Flint Hills between Wichita and Topeka
- City of approximately 25,000 people
- About 12.0% of families and 22.2% of the population were below the poverty line (2010 census data)
- HC team leader – Pat Mais
- Dinner Crew UMW Circle Outcomes:
  - Increase the number of healthy meals served to families with working mothers each week.
  - Increase time spent in Christian-based social interaction and learning among young mothers.
  - Increase opportunities for emotional support and participation in the mission projects within the church, the community, and beyond through active involvement in UMW.

What does the HC Team do?

- The participants are younger mothers who meet and prepare a healthful family main course to take home during UMW meetings.
- New skills are taught if necessary and healthful food choice education is included.
- Devotion time while the food is cooking
- Participation in UMW goals and activities.
- The ladies pay $10 each month to cover the cost of the food. Any money shortage is paid from the Healthy Congregations Program grant.
What changes are demonstrated?

- Knowledge and skill enhancement (individual-level) occur
- Additional social support (interpersonal level) occurs
- Environmental change – moving UMW meetings to utilize church kitchen and adjoining spaces
- Policy – revised time for UMW meetings
- Policy – revised format for UMW meetings

In Summary...

- The desired outcome is to improve the health of the community
- Healthful food initiatives should be multi-dimensional
  - Individual-level (knowledge, attitude & skills), i.e., programs
  - Interpersonal-level (social support & modeling)
  - Organizational (Environmental change and Policy)
- Congregations can start small and add components as the initiative grows
  - Increase awareness of issue (Individual-level)
  - Change “practices” (informal policy that models behaviors)
  - Change the environment (model practices)
  - Written policy (assures accountability and sustainability)

QUESTIONS?

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Look for the question logo on the website