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Hannah Stenger  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst, hstenger@nutrition.umass.edu*

Elena Carbone  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst, ecarbone@nutrition.umass.edu*

Tasha Moultrie-Phillips  
*Mason Square Health Task Force*

*See next page for additional authors*

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Presenter Information
Hannah Stenger, Elena Carbone, Tasha Moultrie-Phillips, Wanda Givens, and Elaine M. Puleo

Comments
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Live Well Springfield (LWS) -- A Community Transformation Initiative
Springfield MENU Program Evaluation

Hannah Stenger1; Elena Carbone DrPH1; Tasha Moultrie-Phillips2; Wanda Givens2; Elaine Puleo PhD3

1Department of Nutrition, University of Massachusetts Amherst
2Mason Square Health Task Force, Springfield MA
3Department of Public Health, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Studies have shown that low-income and minority Americans have a poor diet quality, which increases obesity and chronic disease risk. According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Springfield is among the top five poorest cities in the state. To promote healthy eating behaviors among Springfield residents, Mason Square Health Task Force, a Live Well Springfield (LWS) partner, created a 6-session nutrition curriculum, entitled The MENU Program. The goal is to increase overall health awareness and healthy eating behaviors among residents in communities that are being targeted by the LWS initiative. The program was piloted with a group of female Mason Square residents, aged 60-85 years (n=12), at the Dunbar YMCA in Springfield, MA. Pre-and post-surveys were administered at sessions #1 and #6 to assess nutrition-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. Brief process evaluations were administered at the end of each 60 to 90 minute session to identify program strengths and limitations. Preliminary analysis reveals that participants increased their vegetable intake by 34% and consumption of fresh/frozen fruits and vegetables (vs. canned) increased by 9% and 18%, respectively. Those who reported “always” or “usually” reading nutrition labels increased from 54% to 72%, and those who reported “always” or “usually” shopping at a farmer’s market increased from 18% to 36%. Process evaluations showed positive responses to most of the material presented, particularly information regarding My Plate, portion control, and nutrition label reading. Further data analysis will inform revision of The MENU Program for use with larger, more diverse groups of Springfield residents.

Contact:
Hannah Stenger
hstenger@nutrition.umass.edu
Elena Carbone
ecarbone@nutrition.umass.edu