

Transforming Newark's Food Desert with City Farming

Agency: Greater Newark Conservancy

Student: Otito P. Nwanonyiri, MPH Candidate, Rutgers School of Public Health, Department of Health System and Policy

Community Preceptor: Michelle Robinson, Greater Newark Conservancy, Director of Programs

Sabrinah Lindsay, Greater Newark Conservancy, Director of Education

Academic Preceptors: Dr. Marian Passannante, PhD, Rutgers School of Public Health



Healthy People 2020: Nutrition Education. Diet and Body Weight. Environmental Health. Social and Physical Determinants of Diets.

Greater Newark Conservancy

Greater Newark Conservancy is a non-profit organization that focuses on community restoration through gardening, farming, and nutrition education. Nutrition education is taught to encourage healthy eating even on very low budgets. Greater Newark Conservancy prides itself on advocating for environmental justice, restoring the aesthetics of the community, and most importantly, reducing Newark's carbon footprint.



Project Goals: Under the direction of Sabrinah Lindsay, Michele Robinson, and the education program team at Greater Newark Conservancy, I worked to help educate the community about farming, gardening, and eating healthy even with a low income. Our key focuses were on:

- Teaching children in Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Grade One some of the reasons why farming is important
- Sending home messages with children about the nutritional value of fruits and vegetables
- Teaching children that vegetables and fruits are Yummy, Not Yucky!
- Encouraging community involvement
- Helping families substitute affordable healthy fruits and vegetables vs. unhealthy fast foods



Food Insecurity in Newark: Newark families are increasingly living below the poverty line, making eating healthy foods the last option for many families and their children.

Getting Schools and Involved : The pervasive disconnect between youth and nature threatens children's physical, social and psychological well-being. Collaborating with the schools to create farming field trips will generate many benefits such as:

- Children who lack access to the outdoors and time spent in nature will now have more exposure
- Increased Environmental Affinity
- Gardening programs broaden students horizons and excitement about learning and environmental caretaking
- Through gardening, children discover first-hand the wonders of nature by mulching, planting seeds and transplants and pulling weeds in their own garden plots.
- Through gardening, learning is enhanced in a variety of including science, art, math, geography, history, writing and nutrition

Healthy People 2020 Goals:

- Promote health and reduce chronic disease risk through the consumption of healthful diets and achievement and maintenance of healthy body weights

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/default.aspx>



Many families are not aware that they can purchase inexpensive healthy meals at local supermarkets. At Military Park in Newark, we demonstrated to Newark residents how an inexpensive organic orange juice container and spinach blended up can make a very delicious and healthy choice drink, packed with nutrients like Vitamin A and Vitamin C.



Empowerment: Connecting with Legislators

Connecting with legislators, civic groups, and community members bring forth change. As a Health System and Policy student, this experience has taught me that while desired change in the community through public health efforts may take time, change will come to pass as long as you dare to dream.