

012012 WIC Obesity Prevention Mini Grant Project Summary

Local Agency Number and Name:

01-Austin Travis County HHSD WIC

Title of OPMG Project:

Montopolis Community Garden/P.L.A.N.T.S Garden Class

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Project Overview

List target audience and number of participants seen:

16 WIC families participated in the garden class.

List type of activities for this project (a group class, cooking class, physical activity, gardening, breastfeeding, other):

Hands-on gardening as well as cooking demonstration with harvested crop.

Overall goal for this project:

The goal of the garden is to grow vegetables and fruit trees to be able to use them as a resource to teach WIC participants about sustainable gardening, and the important nutrients derived from consuming fruits and vegetables.

Objectives for this project:

- To promote the consumption of fruits and vegetables by incorporating them into easily cook recipes.
- To learn basic cooking and preparation skills.
- To learn correct portion sizes for infants, toddlers and adults.
- To learn the benefits of the fruits and vegetables in the demonstrated recipe.
- To learn substitutions and/or lower-fat options to demonstrated recipes.
- To learn the health benefits of ingredients other than the 'showcased food,' i.e. canola oil vs. corn oil, trans-fat free margarine vs. butter, skim milk vs. whole milk, etc.

Project description:

The Montopolis Community Garden is part of the Montopolis WIC clinic. There are 12 raised gardens, and 2 compost bins. WIC participants are encouraged to adopt a plot to grow their own family harvest, or can assist with the 4 plots that WIC has designated for WIC class harvest. The class format includes planting or harvesting, and always includes a food demonstration featuring that day's harvest or planting. When there is an abundant harvest, WIC participants are welcome to take some, as well as other Wok with WIC sites to cook recipes with on their class day.

List results and objectives met:

4 classes were taught with a total of 16 participants attending. This year the garden was included in the City of Austin's Community Coalition Garden Tour.

Outcomes:

- 100% of the participants were able to name at least 2 nutrients from the featured vegetables.
- 90% of the participants reported they would be able to prepare the recipe after seeing the featured vegetable cooking demonstration.
- 100% of the participants were introduced to sustainable gardening techniques, basic cooking and preparation skills, and information on how to start a garden.

List curricula, kits or other educational materials used:

GN-001-05 lesson P.L.A.N.T.S. (Participants Learn about Nutrition through Sustainable) Garden Class, and is sometimes co-taught with a Master Gardener, and always taught by a WIC nutritionist and/or RD.

List other resources used, if applicable:

NA

List collaborating agencies or individuals, if applicable:

NA

List the type of incentives that were given:

Incentive items such as fruit/vegetable wheel, recipe books, vegetable peelers, pot holders, measuring cups, flexible cutting boards, vegetable brushes

Helpful ordering information for materials or incentives (if available):

NA

Tips for Other Agencies

What worked well for this project?

- Schedule these classes under the child/general category, so that you don't have moms with infants outside.

- Children ages 1-5 love to be outside in the soil, and help their mom plant or harvest.
- Keep the class to a minimum of 10 adults.
- Schedule morning classes, when the weather is not so hot.
- When plants are ready to harvest, turn a child/general class into a garden class, but give moms the option to participate or give self-pace lesson if she does not want to attend the garden class.
- Have at least 2 staff members instructing the class.
- Allow for 20 minutes to set up and clean-up for each class.
- Allow total class time to be 1.5 hours, and 15 minutes for EBT issuance.

What were the challenges?

- Weather: rain, and heat on the day of class.
- Bermuda grass: overtaken the gardens and walkways.
- Insects: ants.
- Garden Plots are coming apart at the seams.
- Organizing workdays: getting gardeners there all at once is challenging.

What changes would be made for next time, if any

To combat the Bermuda grass and the garden plots coming apart at the seams, in FY 2013 we have plans to stifle the grass with black tarp, then to rebuild the garden beds with Cedar wood and smaller versions of 4 x 4s. We will still have 12 beds. This project will take community volunteers.