

Meeting Notes

Obesity Task Force Healthy Howard Presentation

Wednesday, July 11, 2012
12:00-2:30 PM
HEAT Center
1201 Technology Drive
Aberdeen, MD 21001

Dr. Peter Beilenson, Health Officer of Howard County, and director of Healthy Howard visited Harford County to share information about the Healthy Howard Designation Programs.

Healthy Howard, similar to Healthy Harford, is a non-profit organization which has been created to help local citizens make healthy choices. In particular, the organization currently has five designation programs:

- Schools
- Restaurants
- Workplaces
- Recreation
- Childcare

Healthy Howard next plans to add a designation program for the faith-based community. As Harford County would like to first roll out a Restaurant Designation program, that was the focus of the discussion. To find details on all of Healthy Howard's programs, visit <http://www.healthyhowardmd.org/>.

Healthy Howard's Healthy Restaurant Program began 5 years ago with about 15 designees, this year they have over 100 restaurants. Howard County has about 650 restaurants total.

Below is the Healthy Restaurant Criteria:

1. Cannot have substantive violations as determined by the Bureau of Environmental Health. (If they receive a critical violation they are removed)
2. Offer 2 or more Healthy Menu Options that are available throughout the day (during breakfast (if offered), lunch and dinner).
3. Display nutritional information of all approved Healthy Menu Items in an easy to read location.
4. Be in compliance with the "Clean Indoor Air Act" – no smoking
5. Contain no more than 0.5 grams of artificial trans-fat per serving in all menu items containing partially hydrogenated oils.

Recommendations in starting a designation program/lessons learned:

- Partner with the Restaurant Association of Maryland

- Allow time to evaluate food (determine nutritional content)
- Start by determining which restaurants would meet criteria (e.g. no food inspection violations) and approach those first. Howard staff reaches out to all restaurants, including chains annually.
- Future – would like to do a receipt analysis to determine if people are choosing the healthier options at these restaurants.

Benefits to Healthy Restaurants:

- Healthy Howard decal and certificate on display at the establishment
- Link on the Healthy Howard web page
- Listed in the Howard newspaper annually
- Insert in a local magazine “Columbia Magazine”
- Highlighted at Healthy Howard Day – free food samplings, no cost to designees
- *Award ceremonies – for each category annually

Other key points:

- One critical piece to the success of Healthy Howard has been the County Executive’s support.
- Two Healthy Howard staff support all of the designation programs.
- Staff do site visits unannounced.
- **Healthy Schools** – meet with superintendent once per month. Grew from 12 schools four years ago to 55 schools currently (this includes about 70% of all elementary and middle schools). Started with elementary, then middle, next step will be to reach high schools. Focusing on decreasing sugar sweetened beverages; students and staff sign a pledge.
- **Healthy Workplaces** – 18% of county’s workforce included – break down into small, medium and large businesses. Working with Economic Development agency for sustainability.
- **Healthy Childcare** – 65 members currently.

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