It is well documented that a major diabetes epidemic is sweeping America and the rate of obesity has increased exponentially. According to the CDC, 1 in 3 Americans is Pre-Diabetic. This increased incidence of diabetes and obesity is exacerbated by poor nutrition. Healthy and fresh foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat meat, fish and chicken are less affordable which is one reason low income people are not able to include them in their daily menus. Lack of information about healthy eating also influences food selection and menu preparation.

Program Goal
Reducing the consumption of unhealthy meals to reduce the incidence of obesity and diabetes in high risk populations.

Relevant Background Facts

- ‘The CDC estimates that, if current trends continue the number of US adults with diabetes could rise from one in ten to one in five, or even one in three by 2050.'
- A recent study completed by Englewood Hospital confirmed the same patterns locally as in other areas. Key to these statistics is the increasing population of Hispanics in NJ (approximately 18%) and in the City of Englewood. (approximately 7, 500)
- 52% of Hispanic women and 45% of Hispanic men will have diabetes in their lifetimes (20% more than Caucasians)
- Hispanic people are about 50% more likely to die from diabetes than whites
- The number of Hispanics without health insurance has grown from 29% in 2013 to 40% in 2016
- Black adults are 80% more likely than White adults to be diagnosed with diabetes by a physician.

Description of the community
The City of Englewood is located in northeastern Bergen County. According to the 2010 census, the population is comprised of Caucasians, (42.49%) Blacks (38.98.1%) and Hispanics (21.76%) and a small percentage of people of mixed races and Asians. There are more low-income people in the Black and Hispanic populations than in the other groups. There are two food pantries in Englewood, both providing more than 50% of their meals to people falling into the two most predominate minority groups. Englewood has one of the largest populations of
Hispanics in the area. (approximately 7,500) but the food pantries also provide food to residents of some of the surrounding towns with high Hispanic populations (ie Bergenfield).

In the summer of 2018 a committee was assembled to examine the unmet program needs of the food pantries. The directors of both pantries spoke about the poor nutritional knowledge of their clients. They described their clients as being obese and unhealthy, many with diabetes and other diseases associated with poor nutrition. Although both would have liked to offer nutrition classes to their clients neither had the capacity to do it because of limited staffing a funds.

The Community Chest, a local nonprofit agencies serving the Englewood community for 85 years, agreed to offer a program in collaboration with the local hospital, food pantries, and other nonprofits serving low income residents, to teach low income people how to prepare healthier and more nutritious meals. A coalition called The Partnership for Healthy Eating was formed.

The plan is to offer free dinners to up to 40 people per night to be hosted by local churches. The dinners will take place one night per month for 10 months. Invitations to the dinners will be distributed by the staff of the food pantries to people identified as being in need of this information. The church leadership will also be provided with invitations to give to congregants they believe to be in need.

The dinners will be prepared by nutritionists from Englewood Hospital who will create recipes that are culturally familiar to the diners and created for diabetics. A chef will attend each dinner and prepare the dinners with the help of a crew of community volunteers, and will then demonstrate food preparation techniques to those who are eating dinner. Both the chef and the nutritionist will be available that evening to answer any questions about preparing healthy meals. When leaving for the evening the diners will be given a bag of groceries comprised of those ingredients used for the evening’s dinner and a coupon donated by Dr. Pregers, to purchase additional healthy food. The goal is to assist the attendees with making the meal at home on another evening. Other recipes for healthy dinners will also be distributed.

Child Care services will be provided each evening so that parents are able to participate actively in the food demonstrations. Children will also be served dinner and provided with some education about healthy eating.