Healthy: Wholesome Wave

CASE STUDY: The Doctor’s Orders: Wholesome Wave brings Fruit and Vegetables Prescriptions to Los Angeles

Obesity has been on the rise in the United States for decades, and in Los Angeles County, obesity rates have risen across race and income, and diet-related chronic diseases such as Type II Diabetes, Hypertension, and High Cholesterol have continued to rise accordingly. There is a myriad of reasons that contribute to this trend, but one of the common causes is low consumption of nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables. In the 2020 Food System Dashboard, we also see that consumption of fruits and vegetables has decreased across ages and income levels as well. Accessibility and affordability of fresh produce is just one barrier for many Americans, and one that Wholesome Wave seeks to address.

In 2017, Wholesome Wave partnered with Eisner Pediatrics through their Wholesome Wave Fruit and Veggie Rx program to hand out vouchers for fruits and vegetables to children and families that qualified. These were redeemable at various locations in the local market. Some participants also attended nutritional discussions and cooking demonstrations through partnership with Groceryships.

The organization also provided opportunities that doubled the value of SNAP benefits, also known as Food Stamps or CalFresh in the state of California, for fruits and vegetables. These produce incentives were redeemable at select local stores and farmers markets. In Los Angeles, the redemption rates were markedly higher in farmers markets. Over the course of 2017, the Farmers for All working group at the Los Angeles Food Policy Council called or visited every farmers market in Los Angeles to confirm that they were accepting CalFresh. Buying produce at farmers markets is a strong way to reconnect residents with the bounty produced within the ten counties of the Los Angeles Foodshed. These vendors offer the freshest food available and are often better able to cater to local tastes and minimize packaging waste.

Wholesome Wave continues to find new and innovative ways for food insecure individuals and families to increase access fruits and vegetables in Los Angeles. Some of their recent programmatic work has included reloadable debit cards and gift-cards loaded with funds to purchase produce.

In February 2020, they are getting set to launch a new program that involves the creation of a phone application that allows people to order fruits and vegetables to be delivered right to their door. Users will be empowered to choose from the available produce in their app and use pre-loaded funds to select what they would most enjoy. The home delivery model also supersedes the problem of transportation to a grocery store and back home – a significant barrier to many folks. Wholesome Wave continues to seek opportunities to increase the options and access points for food insecure individuals to include more fruits and vegetables in their eating patterns.