

Plan4Health Brings National Partners to Savannah

Healthy Savannah lives the Connect - Inspire - Grow mission. July's Community Roundtable brought together our national and local partners to talk about health and food access in Savannah.

The Need

Healthy living starts in our neighborhoods, schools and jobs. Everyone should have the opportunity to make choices that allow them to live a long, healthy life, regardless of their income, education or ethnic background. Yet, *Feeding America* reports that 19% of Chatham County residents, and more than one in four children, don't have reliable access to affordable and nutritious food. Almost 30% of adults are obese and the age-adjusted death rate for African Americans due to diabetes is nearly twice the overall rate in Chatham County.

The need for healthy eating is clear. Through Plan4Health, a program funded by the American Planning Association via the Centers for Disease Control, Healthy Savannah promotes access to healthy and locally grown food.

The Plan4Health Work

The Plan4Health team is working with the Savannah Chatham Public School System and Memorial Health to promote healthy and locally grown food in our institutions. This work also connects local farmers to a larger market. Buying local keeps more dollars in our community. For every \$100 spent on local produce, \$80 is respent locally. Compare that to \$25 respent locally per \$100 spent at a typical grocer.

Paula Kreissler, Director of Healthy Living & Community Development, recognizes the importance of the work. She says, "The Plan4Health grant has made a significant difference as it has allowed us to move more quickly to deepen the food system study and to broaden our already strong coalition."



Figure 1 Whitney Shephard, Plan4Health Project Manager, describes health disparities in our area.



Figure 2 Jackie Jackson, Shedrick Coleman, and Michael Walton tour the Sustainable Fellwood garden with APA staff.

The Need

Feeding America reports that **more than one in four children don't have access to affordable and nutritious food** in Chatham County.



Figure 3 CDC Plan4Health Program Manager Lorraine Reed takes a walk through organic vegetable plots with Roundtable participants.



Figure 4 Sylvester Formey, a Sustainable Fellwood development partner, talks about the need for a grocer offering healthy food in the neighborhood.

The Community Roundtable

At the Plan4Health Community Roundtable, we heard from Sustainable Fellwood residents about challenges they face finding affordable, healthy, food right here in Savannah. Sylvester Formey, a Sustainable Fellwood development partner and champion for a grocery store in the community, described his work with partners in the private and public sectors to bring food to west Savannah.

ZaDonna Slay, CEO of the West Broad YMCA, shared how the Growing Edge Community Garden creates opportunities to teach families how to grow and cook healthy food.

Yolanda Fontaine, Director of Resident Services for the Housing Authority of Savannah, discussed efforts to recruit healthy resources, such as grocery stores and nutrition education, to serve residents.

Executive Director Teri Schell, who co-founded the weekly Forsyth Farmers' Market, shared stories of how the market helps families who struggle to get healthy food by doubling SNAP dollars to purchase fresh produce, meat, and dairy. The market also supports local growers, gives us a place to purchase fresh food, and enriches our community.

All of these community efforts aren't happening in a bubble. Each advocate, business owner, agency staff person, and citizen is a part of Healthy Savannah. **You** are Healthy Savannah. Thank you for helping make the healthy choice the easy choice in Chatham County.



Figure 5 Roundtable participants learn about the Plan4Health program.

Plan4Health promotes access to healthy food in Chatham County by:

1. Conducting a food system needs assessment;
 2. Connecting local farmers to new institutional customers;
 3. Developing policy recommendations to promote food access in at-risk communities; and
 4. Activating elected and appointed officials to incorporate health into decision making.
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