

Accessibility and Affordability of Healthy Foods on Martha's Vineyard

University of Massachusetts Worcester

Rural Health Scholars

October 25, 2012

Terry Clarke, Meghan Gibson, Meg Preissler,
Jaimie Reed, Peter Roman, Emily Tsanotelis, & Bronwyn Williams

As University of Massachusetts Medical School 2nd year graduate students and Rural Health Scholars, we were supported by the Mass in Motion grant and the Dukes County Healthy Council to investigate which populations on Martha's Vineyard do and do not have access to affordable healthy foods.

Who We Are

- Second year graduate students at University of
Massachusetts
- Rural Health Scholars



**Mass
in Motion**
Better health. It's your move.®

We are

HEALTH

The Dukes County

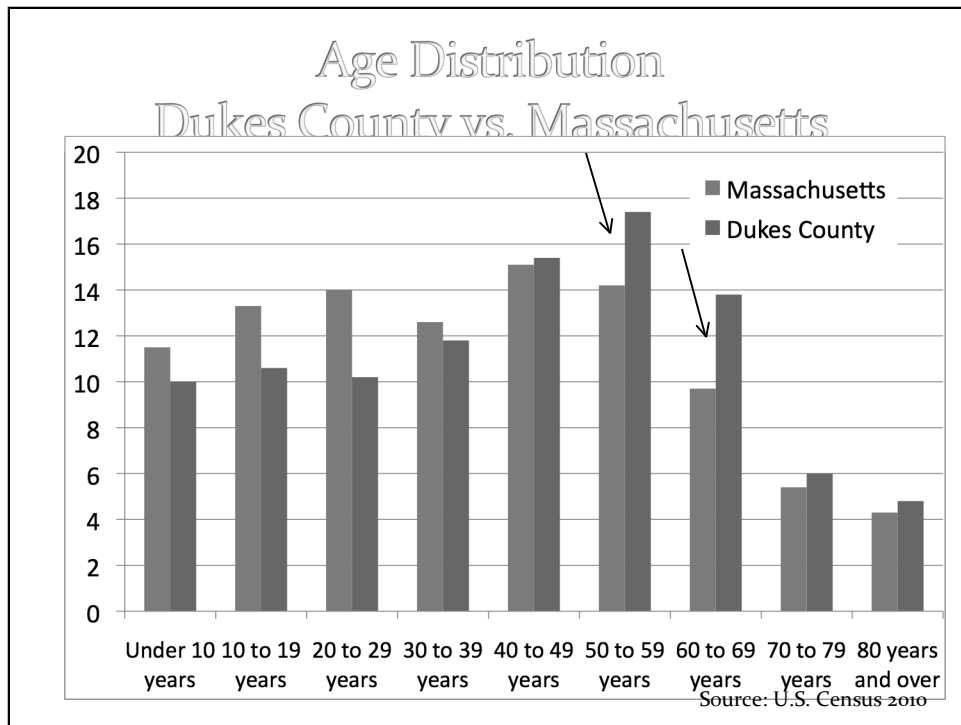
COUNCIL

- Bring Mass in Motion to the island
- To investigate healthy food accessibility and affordability for year round residents of Martha's Vineyard

Explain what the Rural Health Scholars is.

Project Goals

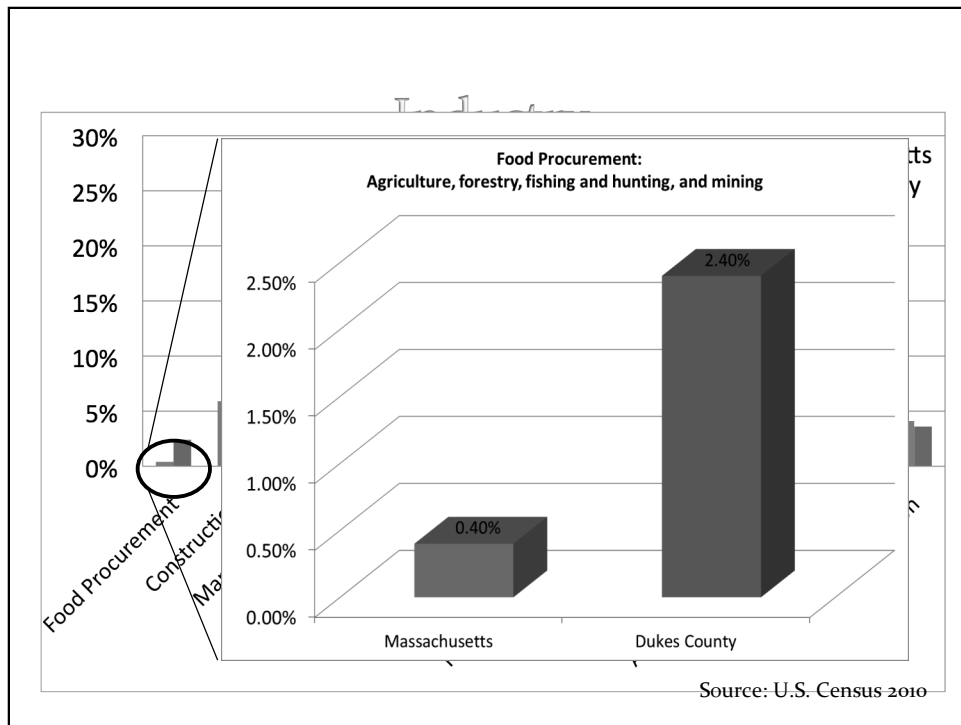
- 📋 Assess the affordability and accessibility of healthy foods on the island
- 📋 Investigate which populations of year round residents do and do not have access to healthy foods, and which can or cannot afford healthy foods
- 📋 Provide useful suggestions of systems changes and improvements that can be implemented to address lack of access or affordability



In 20 year age increments you can see that the island has a higher percentage of 40 to 59, 60 to 79 and 80 year and older residents.

When broken down into smaller 10 year brackets, the differences can be more clearly attributed to the 50-59 and 60-69 year old brackets.

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>



Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining

Construction Manufacturing Wholesale trade Retail trade

Transportation and warehousing, and utilities

Information

Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing

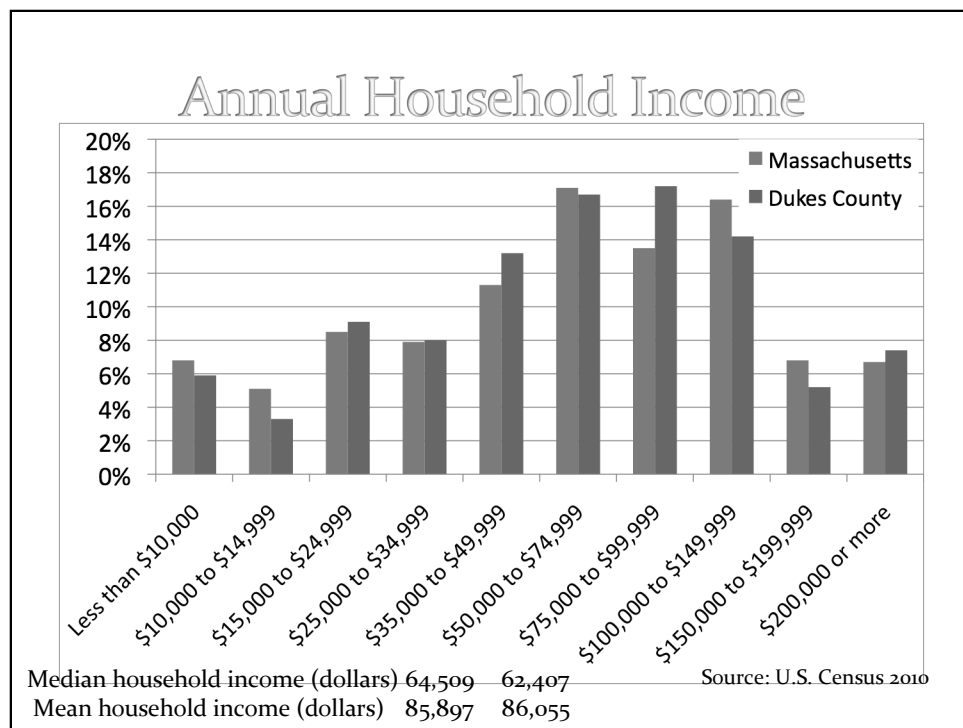
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services

Educational services, and health care and social assistance

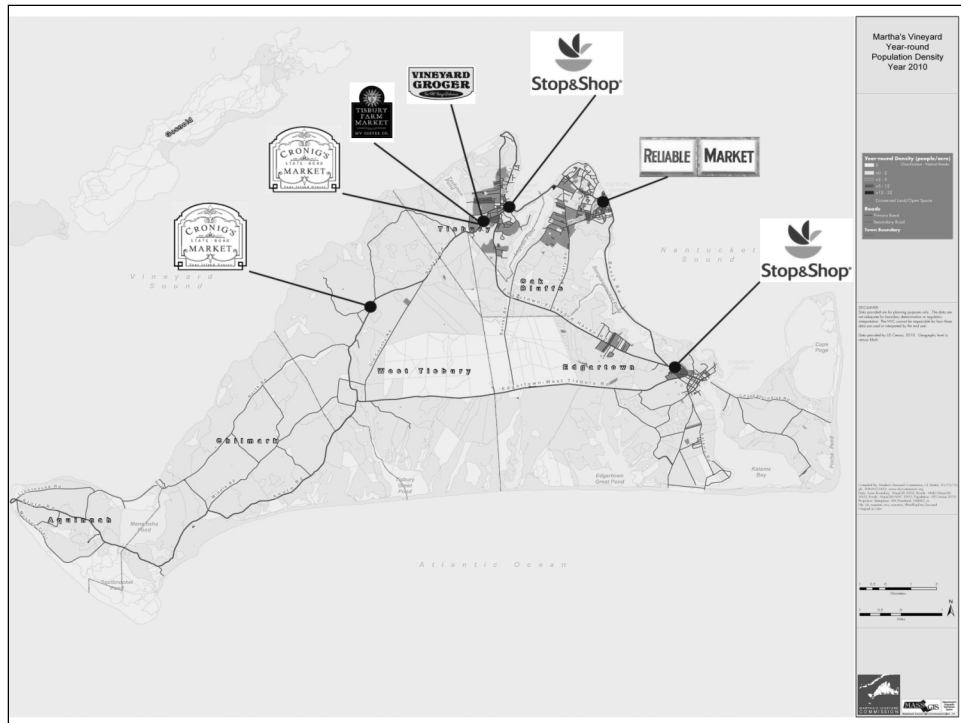
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services

Other services, except public administration Public administration

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>



<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>



As many of you know, the grocery store distribution on the island is somewhat concentrated. You can see here how the majority of stores are in “up island” locations, with the West Tisbury Cronigs being the only “down island” store.

Food Security

- A household's physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that fulfills the dietary needs and food preferences of that household for living an active and healthy life



- Islands: Food security on Martha's Vineyard is different than on mainland America

Three Tenets of Food Security

Food Availability: Is there sufficient food to provide healthful sustenance for all populations on the island?

Food Accessibility: The ability to physically and financially procure, and prepare healthful sustenance.

Food Use: Knowledge of food storage and nutrition as well access to water and sanitation



Source: WHO 1996

Special Considerations for Island Food Security

- **Food Availability**

- Agricultural space, soil health, erosion, transportation from the mainland
- Processing on the mainland
- Climate change
- Changing sea level & salt content in available water supply

- **Food Accessibility:**

- Limited public transportation
- Added price of food due to island transport and local scarcity
- Added price of fuel and preparation materials
- Decreased variety



Why Food Security is hard to study at a community level

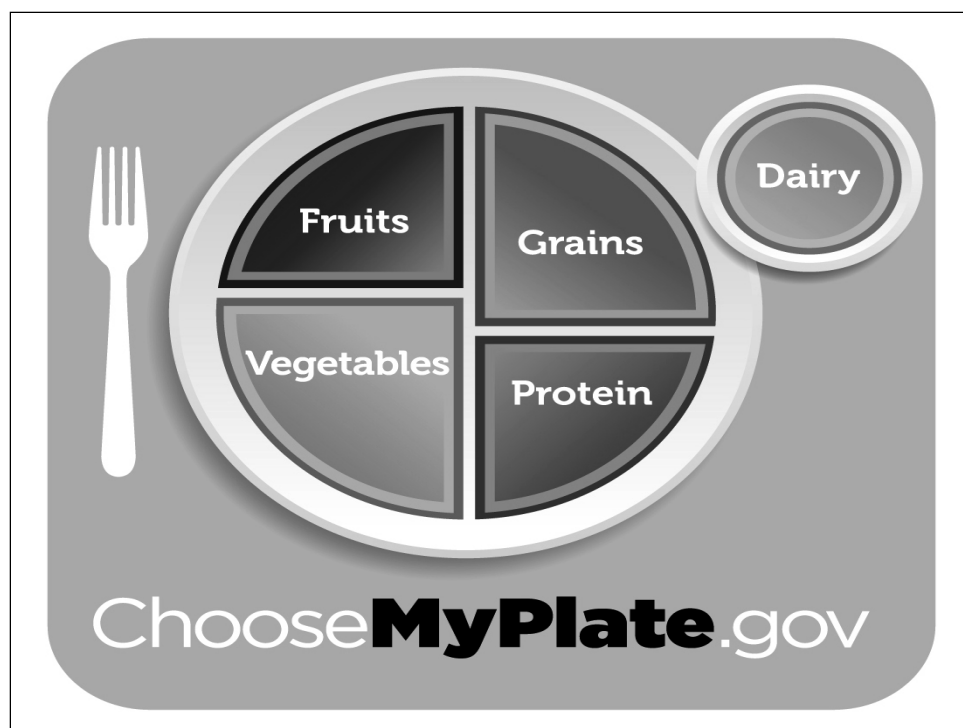
- A community may have food security while some individuals within that community do not
- Because of the stigma attached to the inability to meet basic needs in our society, many are not willing to admit that there is a problem with food security
- Those facing food security issues are often disenfranchised and do not have the same voice in community issues as more mainstream populations



Healthy foods...

- are usually fresh or minimally processed foods, naturally dense in nutrients, that when eaten in moderation and in combination with other foods, sustain growth, repair and maintain vital processes, promote longevity, reduce disease, and strengthen and maintain the body and its functions.

Source: DHHS



Methods

Community Interviews:

- Six Core Questions asked of community members representing and serving various populations on the Vineyard
- Used to identify which populations on the Vineyard do and do not have access to healthy foods

Individuals involved in the schools, farms, transportation, social services, clinicians, small business owners, and municipal leaders

Six Core Questions

- “Who/which populations on the Vineyard generally have access to healthy foods?”
- “Who/which populations do not have access to healthy foods? Why?”
- “What aspects of this community do you think make it challenging for people to obtain healthy food on a regular basis?”
- “Who/which populations do you think have difficulty affording healthy foods?”
- “What changes in systems could be made on the Vineyard to help people get access to healthy foods?”
- “Where do you see realistic opportunities for improving people’s access to healthy foods over the next two years?”

Observations from the Community

Responses to the “Core Questions”

Among Year-round Residents of Martha's Vineyard:	
Who Has Access to Healthy Food?	Who Does Not Have Access to Healthy Food?
• School-age children • Elderly • Wampanoag tribal members • Immigrant populations	• School-age children • Elderly • Wampanoag tribal members • Immigrant populations
• Middle income and above • Education • People with transportation • People with the time • People who make it a priority	• Low income • Lack of education • People without transportation • People without the time • People who do not make it a priority
• People involved in local food • Church groups • All island residents	• Homeless population • People struggling with substance abuse • People with mental or physical disabilities • People ashamed to access services

Responses to survey questions:

1. Populations identified as both having access and not having access

- School age children
- Elderly
- Wampanoag tribal members
- Immigrant populations

For each of these populations, we found that it was generally individuals outside of the population who identified it as lacking access to healthy foods, while members of the population identified themselves as having access to healthy food.

2. Populations identified as having access or not having access, with their inverse being identified in the opposite category

- Income level

Access to healthy food was very commonly identified as affordability of healthy foods

Pinpointing who on the island to include in the “low income” category was challenging, but some themes that emerged include:

- Individuals with seasonal jobs
- Individuals with multiple jobs
- Individuals who lost employment in the recent recession
- Single parent families
- Large families

Barriers to Healthy Eating

- Cost
- Education
- Transportation
- Communication
- Seasonal Economy
- Time and Energy
- Traditions and Habits
- Island Geography

- ~~When food availability is high with~~
- ~~Location of grocery stores is up~~
- ~~Highly seasonal and local produce~~
- ~~Importing food and other resources~~
- ~~Similar to the US, providing "similar"~~
- ~~Reduced recruitment of~~
- ~~Early onset of unemployment~~
- ~~Lack of regionalization~~
- ~~Food and drug regulation between~~
- ~~Producers, suppliers, and consumers~~
- ~~Building and the ability to organize~~
- ~~Advertising and services on the~~
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1. Cost

1. Cost
- All-around cost of living is high
e.g. Less money left for food after paying rent and other bills
 - Local food is too expensive
 - All produce is too expensive
 - Land is too expensive to support farms

2. Education

- ## 2. Education
- Knowledge of nutrition
 - “Smart shopping”
 - Knowledge of cooking
 - Knowledge of the resources available on the island
 - Budgeting and the ability to organize and plan ahead

3. Transportation

- ### 3. Transportation
- Car ownership
 - High gas prices
 - Ability to drive
 - Around the island: access to grocery stores, farm stands, and farmer's markets, bargain shopping
 - Off-island
 - Schedules of public transportation
 - No food delivery services

4. Communication

- #### 4. Communication
- Language barriers
 - Communication between organizations providing similar services
 - Communication between produce suppliers and consumers
 - Advertising about services on the island

Accessing Healthy Food

Existing Models

Island Grown Gleaning Program

- Harvest excess produce from local farms
- Donate to schools, elders, and those in need
- Tuesdays 9:30 AM (July – November)
- 22,000 lbs of fruits and vegetables



Island Grown Gleaning Program

The Island Grown Gleaning Program is part of the Island Grown Initiative, a non-profit here on the Vineyard. Before coming here for our project, I was unfamiliar with the word “gleaning,” but quickly learned, through conversations with small farmers, grocery market owners, school cafeteria directors and many other year round residents, what gleaning is all about. When farms have more crops than they are able to harvest, community volunteers of all ages come together to glean (or gather) the extra produce in the fields. This produce is then distributed to school cafeterias, senior centers, and housing developments for the wampanoag tribe members, the elderly and the disabled, as well as other programs that serve those in need. The gleaning takes place on Tuesday mornings throughout the summer and fall. Last year, 22,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables were gleaned and donated through this program.

Island Grown Schools

- Education “from the ground up”
- Gleaned produce from local farms
- School gardens
- Healthy lunches
- Curriculum development around locally grown food



Island Grown Schools

Schools have done a great job educating students literally “from the ground up.” By incorporating locally grown food not only into the lunch program but also into the curriculum, schools have developed an integrated approach to healthy eating. The Island Grown Initiative has established a farm-to-school program that provides free, fresh produce from the gleaning program as well as opportunities for students to get involved in harvesting fruits and vegetables. School gardens provide an extra source of fresh produce, which kids then can find on the school salad bar.

Island Food Pantry

- 2,740 visits in 2011
 - Seniors
 - Brazilians
- Three bags of food
 - Fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Staples
 - “You pick” miscellaneous
- Local volunteers and donors

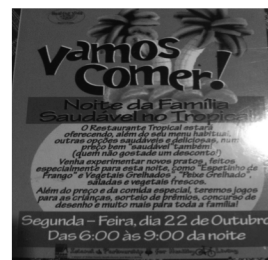
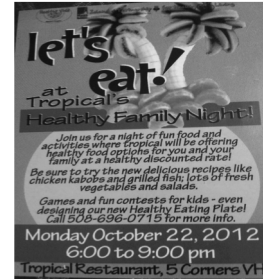


Island Food Pantry

The pantry is open M,W,F from mid-Oct through mid-Apr. People can come to the pantry once every two weeks and pick up three bags of food, whose content has been evaluated and approved by the hospital nutritionist. Each visitor gets fresh fruits and vegetables, along with staples such as pasta and canned goods, as well as miscellaneous items that are donated to the pantry. All first time visitors receive food, then on the second visit a letter of recommendation is required. Referral letters can come from a minister, medical professional, or social worker. In 2011, there were over 2700 visits, which averages to about 105 visits/week. This includes 523 families who received assistance throughout the year. Last year, seniors accounted for at least 25% of visitors, many of whom live in elder housing. Brazilians accounted for another 25% of visitors, down from over 50% in 2008. The Island Food Pantry has served those in need for more than 30 years because of the generous support and volunteerism of community members.

Healthy Vida

- Health coaching
- Grocery store shopping assistance
- Family night at Tropical
- Classes
 - Cooking
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise



Healthy Vida

Healthy Vida is a Health Care Access program whose mission is to explain connections between life style choices and chronic disease. Healthy Vida is a comprehensive program that includes help with both diet and exercise, offering a range of classes that include cooking, nutrition, yoga and strength training. Specialized services such as grocery store shopping assistance and health coaching promote smart shopping, label literacy and healthy eating. The program was first established to serve the Brazilian population but has since expanded to include all islanders who seek assistance.

Elder Services

- Meals on Wheels
- Senior Dining Program
- Councils on Aging
- Blueberry Van
- VTA trip planning



Meals on Wheels delivers lunch and dinner to homebound individuals aged 60 and older. The meals are planned to provide a minimum of one-third of the daily nutrients recommended for older adults. The Senior Dining Program delivers lunch to various centers around the island, where seniors can socialize and share a nutritious meal. Martha's Vineyard Hospital prepares the food for both of these programs. For seniors who want to go out and buy their own food, the Blueberry Van provides \$5 round trip rides from Island Housing to anywhere on the island and includes multiple stops (grocery store, pharmacy etc). The Vineyard Transit Authority offers trip planning sessions and free personal shopping carts to assist with getting to and from grocery stores.

Community Connections

- Neighbors helping neighbors
- Church suppers
- Sharing Hands
- Produce Connection MV
- Barter system
- Discount grocery cards
- Workshops and cooking classes
- Fishing derby



Community Connections

Throughout the past two weeks, we not only learned about, but also experienced firsthand, the spirit of generosity here on Martha's Vineyard. We are grateful for the warm welcome and are impressed by the strong community connections on the island, from neighbors helping neighbors to discount grocery cards, the vineyard tries to take care of its own. We have learned about the vibrant bartering system between food providers such as hunters, fisherman and farmers. Trading goods for services provides an opportunity to share resources and promotes the distribution of local food.

Recommendations

Integrated Ideas & Innovative Approaches

Schools



Schools

Preparation:

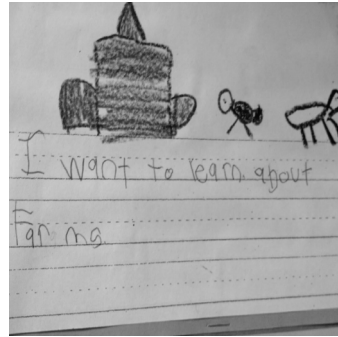
- Gradual transition to allow for adjustment to dietary changes
- Incorporating locally grown foods into menus in creative and novel ways to entice students to try these healthy options
- Taste-testing recipes with school children
- Expand physical space and kitchen sizes of school cafeterias to allow for improved food preparation and storage



Schools

Access:

- Improving communication between local farmers and schools, streamlining the purchasing process
- Sharing processing of gleaned food between schools
- Getting parents and more volunteers involved with the gleaning and processing of locally grown foods
- Improving vending machine options at schools (eliminating sugary drinks and snacks)
- Incorporating endless fruit/veggie bowls at lunches/snack times
- Working with local fish markets to get fish into schools



Schools

Integration:

- Development of an integrated and longitudinal health program that is standardized across schools
- Expansion of the school gardening program and educational component
- Use of school model for other institutions (hospital, prison, Meals on Wheels)



Senior Residents



Senior Residents

Transportation & Delivery:

- Improving the delivery of gleaned produce and increasing the number of drop off sites
- Connecting elders with local farms who could deliver purchases
- Improving the delivery of Meals on Wheels program (food may not be delivered in elder's absence)
- Getting local grocery stores & fish markets to deliver orders to elderly housing (similar to previous discontinued programs)



Senior Residents

Affordability:

- Availability of a senior discount at Stop & Shop and local markets
- Collaborate with local farms to place orders for fresh produce at an affordable cost
- Increase awareness of access to local food pantries, and opportunities for discounts (monthly grocery Stop & Shop gift card)



Senior Residents

Integration:

- Incorporating more local produce and healthy options into Meals on Wheels program, lessening the stigma of being a recipient
- Increasing the awareness of the gleaning program and how to utilize fresh produce through cooking classes and provided recipes
- Increasing senior dining center outreach, improving the atmosphere, and decreasing stigmas



Senior Residents

Integration:

- Increasing outreach between high school students and elders, and participation in local gardening
- Inviting seniors to eat lunch with students at school



Photo Credit: <http://www.iehmv.org/index.html>



Farming & Farmers

- Normalize food contracts between schools and farmers
- Develop food contracts with other institutional buyers
- Subsidize local foods for year round residents
- Encourage producer's co-op
- Encourage the development of more farms
- Ensure living wage for farmers
- Encourage restaurants to buy local



1) Normalize food contracts

even distribution/consistent contribution from gleaners; -more consistent ordering process from local farms, standardized consistency of quality/quantity of foods ordered; -improved communication between schools and farmers, contracts between schools and farms

2) Contracts with other buyers

to ensure markets for farms & share the risk of production, to retain the economic multiplier of purchasing within the local economy

3) Subsidize

Subsidized pricing for 2 or 3 healthy items

4) Structural adjustments of markets

Extended hours for farmers markets and other local markets, (especially with a mind to enabling working folks to attend) *Increase number of markets, Make SNAP and WIC benefits usable at farmer's markets*

5) Encourage restaurants to buy local

models exist for assisting in market creation, relationship-building between farm and restaurant, and consumer education on the value of local foods i.e.

Vermont Fresh Network

6) Living Wage

to maintain local industry, ensure employment, and reduce stress on farmers

Keep improving nutrition of existing free food programs

More local, more nutrient-dense, fresher

Farmers & Farming continued...

- Increase availability & flexibility of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs
- Structural adjustments to farmer's markets
- Community service hours for students to harvest fields
- Process more food on island
- Grow grain on island
- Develop an on-island slaughter facility
- Continued support of Island Grown Initiative/gleaning program



Image Credit: <http://www.chelseagreen.com/content/small-scale-grain-raising-revisiting-a-classic/>

- 5) Process more food on the island
to provide more produce year-round; process and put up extras from the harvest
"don't waste what is grown here"
- 6) Grain is very expensive to import
for both human and animal consumption
- 7) Producer's co-op
to share (and thus reduce) expenses for agricultural inputs, to coordinate growing & surplus management, to aid in establishing contracts with institutions,
- 8) More farms
to bring down prices
- 9) CSA
make sure formats are flexible to accommodate needs: ability to buy $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ shares for individuals, small families, the elderly, sliding-scale payments for low-income residents
- 10) Slaughter
to recapture the money spent off island for animal slaughter
- 11) IGI/Gleaning
program should provide recipes to recipients about easy, healthy & cheap ways to prepare the farm grown foods. Some organizations are doing this, some are developing: what we heard from the community is that this is what they want and need, and to keep it up!
More volunteers to farms so food doesn't go to waste

Delivery & Distribution

- Increase farm to market delivery
- Develop home delivery
- Free distribution of healthy food
- Develop buying club/food co-op that sources local
- Increase store participation for



Source: <http://www.fullcircle.com/wolf/delivery-areas.html>

- 1) To increase number of local products sold at the area markets
- 2) To save time and travel for residents, add delivery for elders at elder housing
- 3) Food co-ops
can buy in bulk from local farms to bring price down and increase access
- 4) Island Club, Greenback systems
maintain free cards for people who visit the food pantry, homeless

Community Outreach

- Use existing media outlets to promote existing programs and healthy cooking
 - Use the school display sign to advertise the community nutrition classes
 - Providing nutrition classes and recipes on MV TV or local radio
- Build a community kitchen
- Create & expand community gardens



East Chop Lighthouse

Education



Gay Head Lighthouse

- Distribute simple recipes with healthy food purchases
- Targeted education: skills, nutrition, health coaching
- At the PCP office
- Household Involvement
- Supermarket Systems
- Store staff guidance when shopping
- Nutrient Sticker system/Internship for students

Workshops

- Going out to the community
- Grocery store “tours”
- Cooking classes
- Recipe tasting at commercial and community kitchens
- Adult education:
 - Label reading
 - Defining healthy foods
 - Benefits of eating healthy
 - Food preparation, shopping, planning, portions, freezing, preserving



Edgartown Lighthouse

Expanding Community Access I



West Chop Lighthouse

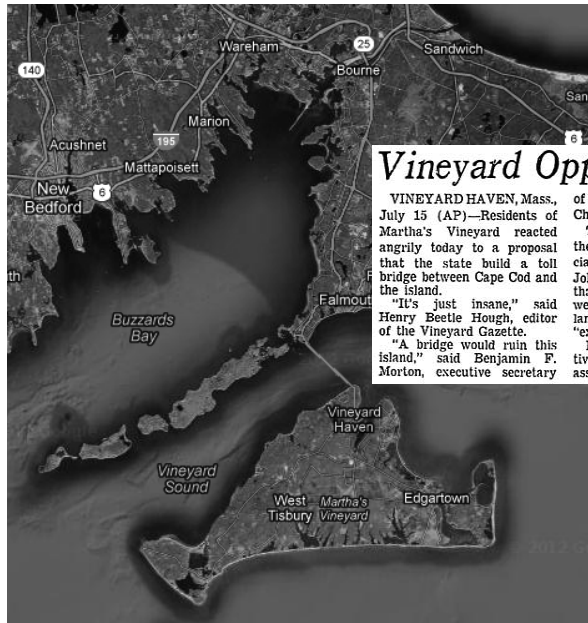
- For the Immigrant Community
 - Newspaper for non-English speaking community
 - Increasing collaboration between immigrant churches
 - Improving immigrant access to transportation
- Winter Hours
 - Increased hours for public transportation
 - Lengthening grocery store hours

Expanding Community Access II

- Additional Island Food Pantry locations
- Labeling one of the daily hospital meal options as a "healthy choice"
- Regionalization to improve efficiency of select services
- And....



Cape Poge Lighthouse



Vineyard Opposes Cape Cod Bridge

VINEYARD HAVEN, Mass., July 15 (AP)—Residents of Martha's Vineyard reacted angrily today to a proposal that the state build a toll bridge between Cape Cod and the island.

"It's just insane," said Henry Beetle Hough, editor of the Vineyard Gazette. "A bridge would ruin this island," said Benjamin F. Morton, executive secretary

of the Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce.

The proposal was made by the Automobile Legal Association in a letter to Gov. John A. Volpe. It contended that Massachusetts motorists were denied access to the island because of what it called "exorbitant" ferry rates.

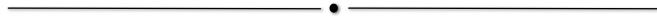
Philip C. Wallwork, executive secretary of the legal association, said that a toll

bridge over the six-mile stretch of water would open up to motorists "badly needed vacation land." He said the rates to Martha's Vineyard "are now the highest ferry fares in North America."

Mr. Morton however, argued:

"A very strong part of this island's intrinsic charm is the fact that it is an island. The first effect of a bridge would be to destroy that."

Final Thoughts



- As a community, you overwhelmingly asked for more nutrition education... Ask for it!
- Don't be afraid to try something new... Start with small changes!
- Increasing cooperation and transparency will improve efficiency... Dare to use the "R" word!
- Keep up the great work!

- 1) Keep improving nutrition of existing free food programs
More local, more nutrient-dense, fresher
- 2) Endless fruit bowl, examples of a healthy and unhealthy can of food in the primary care waiting room
- 3) Lots of overlap between organizations

Thank you to all community
partners, survey
participants, and new friends!

A particular thank you to Mass in
Motion and the Dukes County
Health Council for being such
supportive and gracious hosts!