

Organization: Charlotte Community Health Clinic**County:** Mecklenburg**Address:** P.O. Box 18216
Charlotte, N.C. 28218**Phone:** 704-384-2269**Website:** <http://www.mycchc.com/>**Project:** Educational Sessions on Healthy Eating and Cooking*****Below are excerpts from their final report*****

About the Project: Upon receipt of the funding, two distinct menu options were created: one for breakfast and one for lunch. Once the menus were set, calculations of nutritional values were completed for each meal component yielding low-fat, low-calorie, low-sodium, and carb-appropriate meals that still were delicious! Equipment and foods were purchased to make the healthy cooking classes possible. In order to keep our purchasing costs low, coupons were used from Bed Bath & Beyond; we shopped at Wal-Mart, T.J. Maxx, and Food Lion; and staff negotiated and received a discount from a locally owned restaurant equipment supply company.

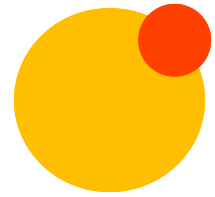


Once our infrastructure was in place, patients in our target audience (obese women of reproductive age) were invited to attend the cooking classes.

Our first class was held on March 18, 2009 (for a lunch) with seven women in attendance. Participants received valuable instruction and tips from Health Educator, Jill Lipson, on the importance of healthy eating, the importance of exercise, and how to include their children in the cooking and meal planning process. The classes served a dual purpose: to demonstrate that healthy cooking could be easy and inexpensive and provided the best opportunity to discuss nutrition.

After the first class, Jill and the clinic team evaluated the time and cost effectiveness of holding a lunch class. The lunch option was more expensive than expected and took longer in its preparation. The decision was made to offer a breakfast menu instead of the lunch menu. Not only was this more cost effective and easy to prepare, but it also stressed the importance of eating breakfast. Our patients' lives are challenging, and not knowing what they can and should eat, they were altogether skipping this most important meal. The breakfast menu consisted of pancakes made with oatmeal, eggs (using half the yolks), strawberries, coffee, and water. Since the items needed for this meal are basic and inexpensive, it has allowed us to accommodate up to 12 patients per class.

After the initial class, five subsequent breakfast classes were scheduled. Patients were recruited for the classes via telephone and in person during their clinic visits. In addition, instead of purchasing incentives



to encourage patient participation (as part of the class) the patients received a full breakfast, menus, and a time of sharing with one another.

Successes: All the information, lecturing, and preaching our patients receive about living a healthy lifestyle cannot stand up to witnessing a healthy meal being prepared before their eyes. It is extremely difficult to convince people to change cultural and/or habitual eating and meal preparation habits. Experiencing how easy it is to prepare inexpensive and delicious, healthy food with a little creativity was demonstrated and made possible during these classes. Additionally, these classes brought patients with common health concerns together and allowed them to discuss as a group how their lifestyles have contributed to obesity and chronic health conditions. Learning about alternative ways to prepare foods they enjoy impacts not only how they eat, but also how their families and friends eat. The trickle down effects from classes like these are immeasurable and have significant implications for preventing obesity and chronic disease in generations to come.

Charlotte Community Health Clinic has grown leaps and bounds over the past year, and the addition of the Healthy Cooking Classes has placed the clinic at the forefront of serving the uninsured of Mecklenburg County. Patients have expressed that these newest classes have encouraged them to think more about what they are eating and feeding their families and have shown them that they can eat delicious meals that are healthy. Grants such as these put faith in local free clinics to advance health services to low-income, uninsured individuals. We are proud to have had the opportunity to prove our commitment to excellence in health care through the use of these funds. Thank you for believing in us.