

This intervention was named the Co-op Healthy Foods Corner and offered packaged, ready-to-make dinners, lunches, and snacks for two to four people. As an alternative to commercially frozen ready-to-eat foods, the meals were comprised of uncooked country foods, whole grain pastas and rice, and fruits and vegetables. These healthy food packages used products available at the local co-op but divided the regularly large consumer packaging amounts into smaller sizes to fit budget and meal requirements. The rationale for creating packages to feed two to four people was for ease of sales and co-op freezer size. The foods were chosen with the guidance of a local nurse, a graduate student in human nutrition sciences, and community members who proposed culturally and locally appropriate recipes. The co-op made no further profit on the foods, but instead divided the cost of the large regular consumer containers among the smaller meal packages to come up with the final healthy meal package price. Program workers were able to create healthy meal packages for two to four people at the same price point, and often lower, than that of commercially prepared frozen dinners. Samples of these meals were available to try at the Healthy Foods Corner kiosk located in the store. Customers were also given take-home placemats printed with nutrition information, including the Nunavut Food Guide, recipes, appropriate portion sizes, explanations for understanding food packaging and Nutrition Facts tables, as well as the benefits of eating country foods over market foods. Some examples of the packaged meals were Arctic char with a vegetable stir fry, and whole grain spaghetti pasta with a tomato, seaweed, and mushroom sauce. Daily local radio announcements gave information about the healthy food packages at the co-op and the program. Radio is a central avenue for spreading information in Pangnirtung, as in many northern and remote communities, and largely contributed to the success of this program.

In total, six individuals worked on the Co-op Healthy Foods Corner program: a program coordinator with a strong educational background in nutrition and project coordination; a local nurse with close community ties who advised the program coordinator on direction; two Inuktitut-speaking community members with an interest in health who acted as the face of the program and were trained in basic nutrition, cooking, and kitchen hygiene techniques; a local radio announcer who spoke Inuktitut and could broadcast ads and information about the program; and the manager of the local co-op store.

The program took place over the period of one month with a different type of food package offered at the beginning of each week (Monday). The program evaluation process was basic, looking only at the time for program-prepared food packages to sell and the movement of perishable items out of the grocery store. Program staff found that all food packages were sold by Day 3 (Wednesday) of being on the store shelves and sales of perishable food items increased. The increase in the sales of perishable food items was most likely due to their inclusion in the food packages; this is still a beneficial outcome, however, as it shows more perishable foods were sold to community households.

Future research in this area would benefit from a more rigorous evaluation to understand the underlying characteristics that led to

the program's success. Additionally, the sustainability of this kind of project needs to be addressed. The most promising avenue for sustainability would be a partnership with northern grocery retailers at a corporate rather than simply local level. It is important to note that this program implemented as above requires no additional cost to the grocery retailers themselves, only an allowance for programming to be run in partnership with the store. Potential benefits to the grocery store include increased movement of perishable goods and therefore decreased product spoilage, given the emphasis on fresh fruits and vegetables in food packages; increased traffic into the store; and promotion of the store via radio messaging about the program.

The Co-op Healthy Foods Corner program is an example of what community-driven passion can achieve. This program not only provided valuable information about health and nutrition, but also built community capacity by training members to develop and implement a health program that addressed local needs. This project would not have been possible without partnership with the local co-op. Their assistance and willingness to be involved is greatly appreciated. We hope this small but successful project may inspire other communities to respond to a local need through involvement of community members.

REFERENCES

- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2008). *Revised Northern food basket—highlights of price survey results for 2006, 2007 and 2008*. Retrieved December 21, 2009, from <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nth/fof/hpsr-eng.asp>

