

RiverStone Health

BILLINGS, MONTANA

HEALTHY BY DESIGN: MAKING GOOD CHOICES EASY

A few years ago, some home gardeners brought in surplus squash to share at RiverStone Health. Informal offerings became regular donations to a table in the lobby. This mini gardeners market grew bigger and moved to the parking lot. A natural way to assist patients with food insecurity was born.

Like most city farmers markets, the one in downtown Billings charges a fee to vendors. Small gardeners didn't find it practical to sell there, but were happy to offer their overflow

produce to RiverStone when asked. RiverStone's center-based gardeners market soon became too large for their space. So they partnered with the parks and recreation department in Billings to start a gardeners market in the park across the street.

The project grew with a partnership called Healthy By Design and other community agencies wishing to combat obesity and address food insecurity. Master gardeners joined in, teaching community members how to cultivate their food. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants & Children (WIC) vouchers became accepted at the market as well. Informal in approach, the market is held on Wednesday evenings during the summer, with food available for purchase and for donation.

A booth at the gardeners market gives youth a \$2.00 voucher to use if they try fresh produce. Recipes and cooking classes are also on display, helping consumers try unfamiliar fresh foods.

RiverStone currently uses a paper screening tool to screen patients for social factors that affect their health. Their goal is to screen every patient annually. By using the social risk screening questions from the PRAPARE tool¹, they ask if patients have had trouble accessing food in the past year. Those with difficulty are referred to case managers who help them with resources such as the food bank, SNAP, meal programs and produce markets. In addition to annual screens, case managers ask about food needs at every encounter with high-risk patients.

RiverStone staff scan paper screening forms into patients' electronic health records to facilitate team-based management of patients' social needs. However, staff hope to routinely integrate social risk screening using information technology strategies, such as having patients independently complete electronic screening forms prior to visits so staff could better plan for their visits. RiverStone remains committed to screening patients and expanding health care to include interventions for social factors.

RiverStone advises patients about resources available in the community. Slowly but surely they feel confident that needs can be addressed in collaboration with others.

RiverStone Health screens patients for needs, then responds with the community to share garden surplus, integrate programs and help youth and seniors start a greenhouse garden together. Montana is largely frontier, with a climate and geography that harshly challenges food security.

“ EVERY PATIENT IS SCREENED ANNUALLY FOR SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH.

A GREENHOUSE FOR YOUNG AND OLD

The latest development in RiverStone’s work with Healthy By Design is a greenhouse project. Three South Side neighborhoods in Billings have been without a single grocery store for over three years. The only place to buy food without leaving the community was a Family Dollar store.

Obtaining a small neighborhood planning grant from the Kresge Foundation, a community coalition that included a youth program, senior center and the health center considered what would best fit the community’s needs and culture. Establishing a greenhouse adjacent to the community center appealed to them as it would both build community relationships and

offer community-driven solutions to food insecurity.

Children in after school, summer and preschool care join in with elders at the Senior Center, learning how to plant fruits and vegetables and making friendships with seniors who have much experience to share. Master gardeners offer advice and support. Families learn the joy of eating home grown food, and new habits are born.

This next step in combating food insecurity is one that has the potential to create generational change. Melissa Henderson of RiverStone Health says the key is to move forward methodically.

INTERVENTIONS

A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN FARMERS MARKET WITH MANY SUPPORTIVE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

SCREENING FOR SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH WITH THE PRAPARE TOOL

AN INTERGENERATIONAL GREENHOUSE PROJECT TO BRING FOOD TO UNDERSERVED AREAS, TEACH GARDENING AND OFFER NUTRITION EDUCATION

PARTNERS

BILLINGS FOOD BANK

FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

SENIOR COMMODITIES

GARDENERS MARKET

HEALTHYBYDESIGNYELLOWSTONE.ORG

KRESGE FOUNDATION

MASTER GARDENERS

SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY CENTER



The PRAPARE tool is a national standardized patient risk assessment protocol designed to engage patients in assessing and addressing social determinants of health. The tool was developed by the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, the Oregon Primary Care Association and the Institute for Alternative Futures. For more information, visit www.nachc.org/prapare.