



WAUKEGAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Functional Health Literacy Program

Waukegan Public Library
128 North County Street
Waukegan, Illinois
60085

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BACKGROUND

Waukegan, Illinois' ethnic and economic landscape is changing rapidly: US Census data shows that Lake County's Latino and African American residents make up 28.8% of its total population; Waukegan's Latino and African American residents compose 72.6% of its population, while the figure stands at 57.1% for North Chicago and 57.6% for Zion. Median household income for Lake County was \$78,026; Waukegan's was only \$45,845.

Library data confirms an average of 85% of past family literacy participants are unemployed, while 75% receive some type of financial support. According to Illinois Partners for Human Services, 2015, Lake County has 61,256 people living under the poverty line – more than any other county in the state.



Closing Waukegan's educational and achievement gap will directly and positively impact the local economy. Since 2012, Waukegan Public Library has worked to reposition itself as a literacy-focused library, one that plays an active role in addressing the root cause of the community's need: an absence of functional literacy in all demographic segments, from early learners to adults. Spurred by data from its own community research and from organizational partners like United Way, the Library focused its work on four key areas of impact representing the greatest needs: kindergarten readiness, grade-level reading, career and college readiness, and adult learning.

Through innovative Library-developed services and deepening relationships with partner organizations, the Library connects Waukeganites to resources that promote and support education from pre-literacy to lifelong learning.





BACKGROUND

With ongoing community engagement to gather input on community literacy, learning and discovery needs, the Library develops and delivers innovative literacy-based classes, programs, exhibits and information services. The Library's approach to literacy and learning is outcomes-based, resulting in learners making measurable, positive changes in skills, behavior, attitude, and conditions. Dedicated staff support adult learners through their journeys and re-engage them to continue their education with opportunities at the Library and beyond.

A key component in its continuum of services is a commitment to equity of access to healthcare services, engaging underserved community members and increasing their understanding of critical health information in order to remove any obstacles to care. This was identified in 2013 as an area of greatest need for the Library's Hispanic/Latino community, and particularly its growing immigrant population. For many Spanish-speaking individuals and recent immigrants, accessing healthcare is challenging due to a variety of barriers, from low English proficiency, low Spanish proficiency among healthcare providers, and lack of familiarity with the American healthcare system. The Library is uniquely suited to address these needs thanks to its long-established trust with Waukegan's Hispanic/Latino community. Now in its third year, the Library's Functional Health Literacy program, FHLP, is expanding to offer its multifaceted services to the broader Waukegan community in service of the Library's broader goals to improve the quality of life in Waukegan.

Health Literacy Coordinator Manny Hernandez
with a student.

BACKGROUND

In 2013, the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Lake County (HFNLC) chose the Waukegan Public Library to lead the work (2012-14 HFNLC Biennial Report to the Community) to improve health literacy and medical access that was started by the Lake County Human Services Alliance. Through its curriculum developed expressly for this community, partnerships with local healthcare providers, and a strong network of Community Health Workers (trained, community-based volunteers), the Library's FHLP continues to bridge the gap in health literacy and access to medical providers in Waukegan and surrounding communities.

The goal of WPL's FHLP is to improve health literacy in adults with low English proficiency and/or low literacy levels and to provide service navigation for a community especially impacted by language, educational, cultural and social barriers to accessing health services. Improving health literacy— the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions— means Waukegan's low-income, primarily Latino population now has better access to accurate and actionable health information.

The program bridges the cultural gap often experienced by Latinos in the health care and social service systems, as well as non Latino community members who are also underserved due to low education, income and social barriers.

The Library adapted the Community Health Worker (CHW) service model that has been successful in Mexico and South America to serve its local community. The Library identified and trained (using recognized, certified health literacy trainers) trusted members of the Latino community to serve as volunteer peer educators. The CHWs serve as liaisons/links/intermediaries within the community to facilitate access to health information, health services and improved self care. CHWs also build individual and community capacity by increasing health knowledge and self-sufficiency through a range of activities such as outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support, case management and advocacy[i].

The program delivers culturally appropriate health education and information in simplest of terms. Year round, adults participate in four week series of classes at the library and community based locations. The workshops increase participants' understanding of relevant diseases/topics such as hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity, nutrition and exercise, along with learning about disease prevention and self-care. Key to increasing health literacy is the delivery of information in simple, clear terms, with culturally relevant examples and concerns. On-going literacy based assessment pre and post participation quantified that 95% of participants increased their ability to understand and retain health information.

BACKGROUND

Case management is used to ensure that participants have access to medical providers and understand how to access medical providers and care. The CHWs are a vehicle for the participants to have informal counseling and social support as they face social and cultural barriers. The CHWs are advocates for not only for program participants but also for the health literacy needs of the community.

Waukegan reflects the national trend of persistent challenges to a robust, responsive health care and public health system in the United States - health disparities, access to care, quality of care, and health care costs. The Library's CHWs are uniquely positioned—as liaisons between local systems and communities, and are skilled as advocates and outreach workers. The Library has a full time (paid) dedicated Health Literacy Coordinator (also a CHW) that coordinates the program's services, CHWs and partnerships.

PARTNERSHIPS

Research documents that strong partnerships with the health and other supporting systems is essential for providing a sustainable link between the community and clinical care[iii].

WPL's FHLP Coordinator works closely with a number of community connections, and these partnerships are a vital part of the Library's health literacy initiatives. The Program's efforts to facilitate access to care and knowledge of health principles has led to beneficial partnerships with the Lake County Health Department, Rosalind Franklin University, Mano a Mano Family Resource Center, Erie Health Reach, Vista Health System, Advocate Condell, Health Connect One, YWCA, Metropolitan Breast Cancer Association, Waukegan Township, Northwestern University, Walgreens and NAMI. The partnerships also include places of worship such as Iglesia Emanuel, Most Blessed Trinity Parish, Iglesia Casa de Vida, Journey Church and Iglesia Sagrada Familia. Through collaborative efforts, adults have been referred to the classes or participated in screenings.

The Library is a key member of a greater health literacy initiative. The FHLP is a working member of the county's Live Well Lake County Health Literacy Task Force which is focused on improving health literacy and reducing the occurrence of chronic medical conditions by 2025.



Waukegan Public Library executive director
Richard Lee at CHW graduation.

IDENTIFIED NEED

The Waukegan area's rapidly changing ethnic landscape means families are held back due to a lack of English language skills and/or functional literacy. Census data shows that in Waukegan, 55.5% of residents speak a language other than English at home, as do 32.2 % in North Chicago and 24.1% in Zion. Many of these individuals face the added difficulty of needing to develop their English Language skills prior to pursuing their other educational goals. There are almost 3,500 households in Waukegan (12.1%) in which no one over the age of 14 speaks English "very well[iv]." Low literacy is associated with a number of poor health outcomes, including higher rates of death, hospitalizations and diagnosis of chronic health diseases. Low numeracy skills impact a person's ability to calculate, measure and understand nutrition labels, along with understanding insurance copays.

Low English proficiency/literacy levels also impacts a person's ability to complete forms, locate providers and use online resources. Research indicates that literacy is a barrier to adherence to medication schedules, following doctor directions for follow-up and the numeracy need to understand doses. Finally, most health information is complex and includes technical terms which make it difficult for some to understand[v]. Income is often another roadblock to care. Only 9% of Lake County residents live in poverty, while 28.2% of Waukeganites' income was below the poverty level [vi].

High unemployment and/or low wages tend to limit medical-provider access due to no insurance or limited only to those who accept public aid [vii]. While the Lake County uninsured rate stands at 9.9%, in Waukegan, almost 23% of residents under age 65 do not have health insurance[viii].

By engaging underserved community members and increasing their understanding of critical health information, they gain the power to prevent diseases, manage health conditions and practice preventive care.

TARGET POPULATION

Local community foundation-funded research confirms that the need for primary care services exceeds county-wide capacity, and Latinos lacked health insurance more than three times as often as non-Latinos. They tend to depend upon emergency room services for medical care. In addition, federal healthcare reform means that more residents qualify for Medicaid, taxing the capacity of the County's already insufficient network of services[ix].

In FY 2016, the program served over 800 adults. The average participant's age was 44. 88% of the participants were female and 98% live below the poverty level. 95% of the participants were Latino and required the information to be delivered in Spanish. The average education level attained was the 5th grade. Most did not have a medical home or did not properly use medical providers.

RESULTS 2016

The program's reach has grown each year of its existence. For the FY2016, 589 adults increased their health literacy through peer education and 213 adults engaged in preventive screenings at health fairs.

Participants were pre- and post tested to ensure that the content is understood and that a measurable increase in knowledge is gained. The assessments demonstrate that those who participate in the FHLP's four week class develop a better understanding of health care options, preventative health care and the necessity of having access to a medical home. The program's post testing documents that 100% of the program participants have an increased understanding of where and how to access health care under certain health conditions and how to access those services effectively.

Participants were able to change their behavior and improve their health. One person, who was found to be in serious condition due to being an undiagnosed diabetic, has since lost 50 pounds and does not require insulin.

All program participants are currently being tracked and case managed by the FHL Program Coordinator assuring accurate referral and successful access to care. 192 program participants required additional case management support to navigate through the local medical network to find a medical provider that addressed their health needs. These 192 individuals were previously connected to a medical home but due to unforeseen reasons were looking for different access points.

IMPROVING HEALTH LITERACY IMPROVES COMMUNITIES.



Healthy eating night at FHLP - changing behaviors one bite at a time!

2017 PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

The FHLP continues to bridge the gap in health literacy and access to medical providers in Waukegan and its surrounding communities. Its long-term goal is to provide health literacy and service navigation for a community especially impacted by language or literacy levels, educational, cultural and social barriers to accessing health services.

BUILD CAPACITY

The program coordinator will be certified as a trainer in diabetes and mental health education.

Five additional CHWs will be identified and trained in conjunction with another grant partner's CHWs.

DEVELOP A REPLICABLE MODEL

The FHLP Program Coordinator, as part of the Live Well countywide health literacy initiative, will contribute to countywide health literacy curriculum, resources and programming that can be delivered by other community organizations, including libraries.

DEVELOP DISEASE-SPECIFIC EXPERTISE

The program will add disease specific health literacy education: the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP), an outcomes based 10 week adult education program will be implemented with the goal of lowering participant lab results and increasing new behaviors that result in better disease management.

All CHWs will become certified DEEP facilitators.

I have learned to go with a healthy diet with the advice and exercise that have helped me to have good health. I am happy because the library cares for our wellbeing. I hope that people can value the effort of the library and Professor Manuel.

MARGARITA
FHLP LEARNER



FHLP presentation at
Waukegan Public Library

2017 PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

This program continues to be spearheaded by Manny Hernandez, WPL's Health Literacy Coordinator, who is a native Spanish speaker and Certified Community Health Worker (Rosalind Franklin University). He is managed by Gale Graves, WPL's Education and Literacy Services Manager, with a Master's in Business Administration and a dozen years of adult education instructional experience and training related in literacy-based instruction, curriculum development, program development and grant administration. The Library's Data and Grant Coordinator, Illaina Baylor-Johnson, supports the program through data management assistance and grant support.

DIVERSIFY TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience will broaden and monthly (12) workshops will be targeted to the non-Latino underserved adults that have low literacy and other socioeconomic challenges.

IMPLEMENT NEW REFERRAL SYSTEM

The program will partner with the city's efforts to implement an online referral system to coordinate and follow up on referrals to providers.

EXPAND COMMUNITY- BASED PARTNERS

An additional three community sites will be identified for the delivery of health literacy workshops.

2017 ANTICIPATED RESULTS

BUILD CAPACITY

- 470 adults completing health literacy workshops
- 11 Community Health Workers delivering workshops
 - 14 workshop series - 4 weeks each - Latino-focused, in Spanish
 - 12 bilingual workshops once per month
 - 300 adult participants in 15 Preventive Screenings/Health Fairs at WPL and partner locations
- Pilot of electronic referral software with partners
 - Referring at least 50 adults to community resource and providers



INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS

- 11 CHWs will be trained and certified to deliver the Diabetes Empowerment Education Program (DEEP)
- 90% of adult learners who complete the DEEP workshops will demonstrate improvement in diabetes self-care
 - 90% of the DEEP completers will demonstrate at least one health improvement: weight loss, lower A1C, improved medication schedule adherence
 - 90% of the health literacy workshop completers will increase their health knowledge, as indicated by pre and post testing results

INCREASE UTILIZATION OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Expand program to 3 - 4 new community sites for delivery of health literacy workshops or prevention screenings



FHLP community partners at Waukegan Public Library.

STATISTICS

88,800

Population served

\$4,357,968

Total annual budget

\$111,348

Per capita budget

465,473

Circulation

5.7%

Percent of budget spent on materials

343,673

Physical visits

121,000

Virtual visits

70

Staff

14%

Percentage of staff who are professional librarians



FHLP students in WPL's
summer fitness class
walking around the city
- with their Waukegan
Public Library
backpacks, of course!

NOTES

[i] <http://www.apha.org/apha-communities/member-sections/community-health-workers>

[ii] <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/09/14/19/support-for-community-health-workers-to-increase-health-access-and-to-reduce-health-inequities>

[iii] Closing the Gap: Applying Global Lessons toward Sustainable Community Health Problems in the U.S.; Report of the Office of the U.N. Special Envoy for Health; accessed at <http://www.healthenvoy.org/essential-role-of-community-health-workers-in-the-us-new-report/>

[iv] <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

[v] <https://Health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/factsbasic.html>

[vi] <http://www.city-data.com/city/Waukegan-Illinois.html>

[vii] American Journal of Public Health, <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/toc/ajph/96/8>

[viii] Waukegan Census QuickFacts: <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/1779293>

[ix] RPA Report on Health Care in Lake County, 4-27-12, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1Xz3PFd5SIkOUduN19YWDBfQ00/view?pli=1>

[x] Illinois School Report Cards <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/CompareSnapShots.aspx?id=340490600260022,340491870260001,340491260170001&source=academicprogress&sourceID=340490600260022>