

2.2 Nutrition Success Stories



Healthy Food Program

the people

The University of Maine at Fort Kent (UMFK), founded in 1878, is located in St. John Valley, Maine, bordering New Brunswick, Canada. Approximately 750 students attend the liberal arts school, a member of the University of Maine System (UMS). UMFK offers a top quality education in a personalized atmosphere. Along with participating in the University of Maine System's Health Improvement Committee, UMFK has its own Campus Health Improvement Program, called CHIP.

the need

UMFK was interested in providing support and encouragement for employees to make healthier choices, which can translate into improved health, increased productivity, and increased satisfaction with their jobs.

the idea

The CHIP committee implemented a variety of nutrition initiatives to promote healthy eating and support employees with healthy and convenient choices in the cafeteria and snack bar.

the idea at work

The CHIP committee identified several opportunities to increase availability of fruits and vegetables to employees. These included a Five A Day fruit and vegetable program, monthly free fruit day, reducing the cost of salads, and providing a soup and salad option at the snack bar. After getting administrative support, CHIP worked with the Campus Food Service Administrator and Dining Hall Manager to implement these nutrition initiatives. An introductory memo was sent in February 2002, along with an introduction by the UMS Benefits Director, during a health benefits and wellness information session conducted on campus. Later, in the spring of 2002, the Five A Day brochures were distributed, and in the fall, a flyer was sent to new faculty and staff.



the cost

The estimated annual cost of the monthly free fruit day, along with reducing the cost of salads and fruits, totaled approximately \$1,100. After the initial implementation, it took four staff members about a half-hour each to purchase the fruit and deliver it along their route. Prep time for fresh fruit cups (melon, grapes, sometimes pineapple) also increased because, at ten cents a cup, demand increased considerably. Total costs for the Five A Day program were about \$200. This money was used to purchase promotional materials. Staff time was minimal, as it was limited to posting these brochures in the spring and fall.

the results

Providing healthier foods has improved not only employees' eating habits, but their perception of the organization as well. Of the 30% of employees who responded to a detailed survey, nearly all (92.7%) participated in the free fruit day on the fifth of every month. Many found the program to be beneficial. As evidence of this, 78% of survey responders agreed that UMFK provided them opportunities to consume fruits and vegetables, as compared to only 40% one year prior to these new initiatives. Anne Chamberland says, "Having the availability of inexpensive fruits on campus made me eat my daily servings."

During the summer of 2003, a trial honor system program, made up of healthy options (yogurt, salads, etc.), was also created. This is a positive step towards providing healthier food options to employees while reducing the staff time involved, thus ensuring sustainability.

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