



Allina Health Neighborhood Health Connection™

Findings from the 2019 Neighborhood Health Connection Grant Program Evaluation Survey

Authors: Julia Miller and Jessica Tokunaga

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451 Lexington Parkway North | Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104
651-280-2700 | www.wilderresearch.org

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Background

This is the seventh year that Wilder Research has evaluated the Neighborhood Health Connection (NHC) program with a focus on measuring changes in program participants' social connections and healthy behaviors. Results from previous evaluation reports can be accessed on the [Allina Health website](#). Although the programs that have received funding through NHC have changed over time, the evaluations have consistently shown positive short-term outcomes related to social connectedness, healthy eating, and physical activity.

The role of social connectedness in influencing health

The Neighborhood Health Connection (NHC) grant program was developed based on research demonstrating that social connections--the relationships that individuals have with their family members, friends, and neighbors--can contribute to positive health outcomes in a variety of ways. Social connections can improve health indirectly, such as when positive behavior change is supported through the development and reinforcement of positive social norms or when residents with different backgrounds organize to influence policy decisions that impact health. Research also demonstrates that when individuals feel connected with others they can experience direct physical benefits, including reduced stress and other symptoms associated with social isolation. Health outcomes can also improve as a result of people accessing resources that support health. Therefore, social connections between residents who share different backgrounds can open doors to new sources of information and health resources in the community.

About Neighborhood Health Connection

NHC is directed through the central office of Allina Health Community Benefit and Engagement (Allina Health), but largely administered at a regional level by the Allina Health community engagement leads. In 2019, the program awarded 68 grants, ranging from \$750 to \$10,000, to organizations through a competitive grant making process. All funded organizations were required to implement activities focused on a) increasing social connections and b) improving healthy eating and/or physical activity among participants. Because earlier evaluation results suggested a positive relationship between changes in healthy behavior and social connections and frequency of participation, all grantees were required to offer a minimum of six activities for the same group of participants. Beyond this requirement, there were no restrictions on the types of activities. As a result, the funded activities varied widely (e.g., community gardening, sports and exercise groups, cooking and nutrition classes), and reached different populations.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation for NHC was designed to answer the following key questions:

- Were the NHC grant-funded activities successful in increasing social connections among participants at the conclusion of the grant period?
- Did participants report an increase in healthy eating and/or physical activity at the conclusion of the grant period?
- What is the impact of the program on specific participant populations (e.g., participants of color, those who receive public support)?

To answer the key questions, a survey was administered to program participants at the end of the activity or at the end of the NHC grant funding period in December 2019 (whichever came first). This summary reports results from the survey.

Methods

Participant survey and response rates

Written or online surveys were administered to adults who participated in two or more program activities. Of the 68 grantees that were funded, three did not administer the survey because their participants were under the age of 18 or attended less than 2 sessions, making them ineligible to participate. Another five grantees were unresponsive or never returned surveys. In the survey, participants were asked how the activities impacted their connections with others and their own health behaviors. The survey was available in the three languages spoken by the majority of participants: English, Somali, and Spanish. The participant survey was completed by 843 of the approximately 1,217 eligible participants (i.e., adults age 18 or older who participated in an activity at least twice), a response rate of 69%. Online surveys were completed by 211 participants and paper surveys by 631. A total of 160 surveys were completed in Spanish and were translated to English and included in this report. Some grantees had a response rate lower than the overall rate.

Statistical significance

For the participant survey, frequency of participation was categorized into three dosages: high (participants attended 6 or more activity sessions), moderate (4-5 sessions), or low (2-3 sessions). Chi-square tests were conducted to measure statistically significant differences in social connectedness and healthy behaviors based on dosage and receipt of public support, a proxy measure for lower socioeconomic status. All differences in the report noted with the adverb “significantly” are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Limitations

Overall, caution should be used when interpreting the results as they may not represent the thoughts of all participants who were eligible for the survey. In addition, the results of the significance testing should be interpreted with caution as slightly more than half of the participants completed the survey. Also, the findings in this report focus on short-term changes that may not result in long-term behavior change.

Summary of key findings from 2019

The key findings from the evaluation are included in the following sections. See the Appendix for detailed data tables of all results from the participant survey.

Overall observations

- Similar to previous years, a majority of survey respondents reported positive changes in social connections and healthy behaviors.
- Survey results suggest differences in participants' social connections and healthy behaviors based on dosage of participation. Those who attended six or more program activities were more likely to report improved social connections and healthy behaviors. Other factors not directly assessed in the evaluation, such as program effectiveness, may also contribute to these observed differences.

Participant characteristics

- Sixty-eight grantees were funded during the 2019 NHC program. At least 3,699 participants were reached through these activities. This number does not include 8 grantees that were unable or chose not to provide attendance information for their funded activity.
- As in previous years, the majority of survey respondents were female (79%), white (65%), age 50 and older (53%), spoke English (76%), did not receive public support (65%), and rated their health as good or better (35% good, 36% very good, 16% excellent).

Impact on social connections

Overall impact

Nearly all participants reported that as a result of participating in this activity, they strengthened current connections (89%) and met new people through the activity (90%). Of those that made new connections, over half (58%) were “very confident” they would stay in touch with at least one person they met. The evaluation did not include questions to assess connectedness more broadly in the community or the quality of relationships.

Differences by dosage

To consider whether the number of activities attended (or dosage) may impact differences in outcomes, participants were grouped into the following categories: high frequency (51% attended 6 or more activities), moderate frequency (28% attended 4-5 activities), or low frequency (21% attended 2-3 activities).

- Participants who took part at a high frequency were significantly more likely to say they connected with people they hadn't known before (94%), compared to those who participated at a moderate (87%) or low frequency (86%).
- Those who took part at a high frequency were also significantly more likely to say they were “very confident” (62%) they will stay in touch with at least one person they met, compared to those who participated at a moderate (58%) or low frequency (48%).

Differences by receipt of public support

Thirty-five percent of participants who completed the survey reported they receive help through a public benefit program, a proxy measure for lower-income households. In terms of social connectedness, the results for those who receive public support and those who do not receive public support were nearly identical.

- Ninety-one percent of people receiving public support said they made new connections, compared to 92% of those not receiving public support. Of those, 59% of those receiving public support and 58% of those not receiving public support said they were “very confident” they would stay in touch with at least one person they met.
- Socioeconomic status did not impact whether participants strengthened existing relationships. Among both people receiving public support and those who do not, a majority of respondents (89%) said they strengthened connections with people they already knew.

Impact on physical activity

Overall impact

- At the end of the activity, 26% of participants said they currently get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five to seven days in an average week (recommendation comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion). Thirty-nine percent said they get physical activity three to four days per week, and 30% said they get physical activity one to two days per week.

- Over half of participants (62%) reported that as a result of the NHC activity, they were more physically active than six months ago. Thirty-seven percent were doing about the same amount of physical activity.

Differences by dosage

Participants who participated at a high frequency were significantly more likely to respond that they were more physically active now than six months ago. Seventy percent of high frequency participants were more physically active, compared to 59% of those with moderate participation and 46% at low participation.

Differences by receipt of public support

- A slightly higher percentage of participants that do not receive public support reported at least 30 minutes of activity 5-7 days a week (28%) than those receiving public support (23%). Those not receiving public support were significantly more likely to say they were active 3-4 days a week (42%) than those receiving public support (34%), and less likely to say they were active 1-2 days a week (26%) than those receiving public support (37%).
- Participants who do not receive public support were significantly more likely to say they were doing the same amount of physical activity as six months ago (40%) than those receiving public support (32%).

Impact on healthy eating

Overall impact

- At the end of the activity, the majority of participants said they follow a healthy diet at least some of the time (81%). Fewer said they follow a healthy diet occasionally (15%) or not at all (4%).
- Seventy-one percent of participants said that as a result of the NHC activity they eat healthy meals and snacks more often than six months ago, and 24% said they eat healthy meals and snacks about the same as six months ago.

Differences by dosage

Participants with a high level of participation were significantly more likely to say they ate healthy meals and snacks more often than six months ago (75%), as compared to those with a moderate (69%) or low (62%) level of participation.

Differences by receipt of public support

A similar percentage of participants who receive public support and those who do not receive public support said they eat more healthy meals and snacks now than six months ago (69% and 73%, respectively).

Program feedback

Participants were asked a series of open-ended questions to gather their opinions on the best part of participating in their activities, barriers to participating, and any further comments or thoughts. These responses are summarized below and a complete list of responses can be found in the appendix.

Participant highlights

When asked about the best part of participating in their activity or program, the most common themes from respondents were:

- Having the opportunity to socialize and be around other people (26% of respondents mentioned this)
- Having the opportunity to exercise and be active (12%)
- Learning about healthier nutrition (10%)
- Meeting new people (10%)
- Enjoying the food available, such as samples, cooked meals, or garden harvests (8%)

Barriers to participation

Forty-one percent of respondents indicated they experienced no barriers to participation. The most common barriers participants identified were:

- Other time conflicts, such as appointments or classes (9%)
- Work conflicts or busy work schedule (9%)
- Health issues, such as getting sick or mobility issues (7%)
- Generally being too busy to participate (6%)
- Weather, such as days being too hot, too cold, or too rainy (5%)

General comments and thoughts

Participants had the opportunity to give additional thoughts or comments on the survey. The most mentioned themes were:

- Program was generally good or great (12%)
- Enjoyed the activity or program (11%)
- Continue offering the program or activity (8%)
- Great staff (7%)
- Program-specific recommendations for improvements (5%)

Appendix

The following data tables summarize responses from 843 NHC participants who completed a survey. Not all survey items were answered by all respondents. For some items, such as demographic information, participants were able to respond to the item with “I choose not to answer.”

A. Participants’ demographic information, health status and behaviors, and frequency of participation

A1. Age of participants (N=767)

| What is your age? | Number | Percent |
|-------------------|--------|---------|
| 18-29 | 81 | 11% |
| 30-39 | 141 | 18% |
| 40-49 | 138 | 18% |
| 50-64 | 163 | 21% |
| 65 or older | 244 | 32% |

Note. Those under the age of 18 were not eligible to take the survey. Forty-nine participants selected “I choose not to answer.”

A2. Gender of participants (N=821)

| What is your gender? | Number | Percent |
|----------------------|--------|---------|
| Female | 651 | 79% |
| Male | 170 | 21% |

Note. Eight participants selected “I choose not to answer.”

A3. Race or ethnicity of participants (N=828)

| How would you describe your racial or ethnic group? | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| White or Caucasian | 537 | 65% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 191 | 23% |
| Asian, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Southeast Asian | 37 | 5% |
| American Indian/Native American | 15 | 2% |
| Black or African American | 15 | 2% |
| African, including Oromo, Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Sudanese | 12 | 1% |
| Another race or ethnic group | 3 | <1% |

Note. Thirty-five participants selected “I choose not to answer.” Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

A4. Preferred language of participants (N=807)

| What is your preferred language? | Number | Percent |
|----------------------------------|--------|---------|
| English | 611 | 76% |
| Spanish | 167 | 21% |
| Hmong | 13 | 2% |
| Somali | 3 | <1% |
| Another language | 13 | 2% |

Note. Six participants selected "I choose not to answer." Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

A5. Nativity of participants (N=816)

| Were you born in the U.S.? | Number | Percent |
|----------------------------|--------|---------|
| Yes | 588 | 72% |
| No | 228 | 28% |

Note. Eight participants selected "I choose not to answer."

A6. Receipt of public support among participants (N=780)

| Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care (e.g., Medical Assistance, SNAP, WIC, Section 8, child care assistance)? | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Yes | 271 | 35% |
| No | 509 | 65% |

Note. Forty-two participants selected "I choose not to answer."

A7. Participants' self-reported health status (N=826)

| In general, how would you rate your overall health? | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Excellent | 128 | 16% |
| Very good | 293 | 36% |
| Good | 292 | 35% |
| Fair | 100 | 12% |
| Poor | 13 | 2% |

Note. Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

A8. Participants' self-reported level of physical activity in an average week (N=818)

| During an average week, whether at work, at home, or anywhere else, how many days did you get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity? <i>Moderate activities cause only light sweating and a small increase in breathing and heart rate.</i> | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| 0 days | 38 | 5% |
| 1-2 days | 248 | 30% |
| 3-4 days | 319 | 39% |
| 5-7 days | 213 | 26% |

A9. Participants' self-reported current eating habits (N=817)

| Overall, how would you describe your current eating habits? A “healthy diet” is one that is high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, low in sugar and saturated fats, and includes meals and snacks that are not too big in size. | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| I follow a healthy diet most of the time | 313 | 38% |
| I follow a healthy diet some of the time | 352 | 43% |
| I follow a healthy diet occasionally | 120 | 15% |
| I do not follow a healthy diet | 32 | 4% |

A10. Frequency of participation among participants (N=842)

| Since March 7, 2019, approximately how many times did you participate in this Neighborhood Health Connection activity (this includes meetings, events, or groups that meet at work)? | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| 2-3 | 177 | 21% |
| 4-5 | 237 | 28% |
| 6 or more | 428 | 51% |

Note. Those who took part 0-1 times were not eligible to take the survey.

B. Participants' survey responses: Social connectedness

B1. Self-reported changes in strengthening current relationships among participants (N=827)

| By participating in this activity, did you strengthen connections with people who you knew before this activity started? | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| Yes | 735 | 89% |
| No | 92 | 11% |

B2. Self-reported changes in relationships among participants and their confidence in maintaining new relationships

| By taking part in this activity, did you connect with new people who you hadn't known before? (N=837) | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Yes | 755 | 90% |
| No | 82 | 10% |
| How confident are you that you will stay in touch with at least one person you met? (N=747) | | |
| Very confident | 434 | 58% |
| Somewhat confident | 211 | 28% |
| Not at all confident | 38 | 5% |
| Unsure | 64 | 9% |

B3. Percentage of participants who reported strengthening current relationships, by their frequency of involvement

| By participating in this activity, did you strengthen connections with people who you knew before this activity started? | Approximately how many times did you participate in the Neighborhood Health Connection activity? | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low 2-3 (N=176) | Moderate 4-5 (N=231) | High 6 or more (N=420) |
| Yes (N=735) | 151 (86%) | 201 (87%) | 383 (91%)* |
| No (N=92) | 25 (14%) | 30 (13%) | 37 (9%)* |

*People that attended 6+ times were significantly more likely than people who attended 2-3 times to say they strengthened connections with people they already knew. Differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

B4. Percentage of participants who reported making new connections, by their frequency of involvement

| By taking part in this activity, did you connect with new people who you hadn't known before? | Approximately how many times did you participate in the Neighborhood Health Connection activity? | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low 2-3 (N=177) | Moderate 4-5 (N=235) | High 6 or more (N=425) |
| Yes (N=755) | 152 (86%) | 205 (87%) | 398 (94%)* |
| No (N=82) | 25 (14%) | 30 (13%) | 27 (6%)* |

*People that attended 6+ times were significantly more likely than people who attended fewer times (2-3 or 4-5) to say they connected with new people. Differences are statistically significant at p<.05.

B5. Percentage of participants who are confident that they'll stay in touch with a new connection, by their frequency of involvement

| How confident are you that you will stay in touch with at least one person you met? | Approximately how many times did you participate in the Neighborhood Health Connection activity? | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low 2-3 (N=152) | Moderate 4-5 (N=200) | High 6 or more (N=395) |
| Very confident (N=434) | 73 (48%) | 116 (58%) | 245 (62%)* |
| Somewhat confident (N=211) | 47 (31%) | 58 (29%) | 106 (27%) |
| Not at all confident (N=38) | 12 (8%) | 6 (3%) | 20 (5%) |
| Unsure (N=64) | 20 (13%) | 20 (10%) | 24 (6%) |

*People that went 6+ times were significantly more likely to say they were very confident they would stay in touch with at least one person they met. Differences are statistically significant at p<.05.

B6. Percentage of participants who reported strengthening current relationships, by their receipt of public support

| By participating in this activity, did you strengthen connections with people who you knew before this activity started? | Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care? | |
|--|---|---------------|
| | Yes (N=264) | No (N=503) |
| Yes (N=683) | 234 (89%) | 449 (89%) |
| No (N=84) | 30 (11%) | 54 (11%) |

B7. Percentage of participants who reported making new connections, by their receipt of public support

| By taking part in this activity, did you connect with new people who you hadn't known before? | Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care? | |
|---|---|------------|
| | Yes (N=270) | No (N=507) |
| Yes (N=714) | 246 (91%) | 468 (92%) |
| No (N=63) | 24 (9%) | 39 (8%) |

B8. Percentage of participants who are confident that they will stay in touch with a new connection, by their receipt of public support

| How confident are you that you will stay in touch with at least one person you met? | Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care? | |
|---|---|------------|
| | Yes (N=244) | No (N=463) |
| Very confident (N=411) | 145 (59%) | 266 (58%) |
| Somewhat confident (N=195) | 72 (30%) | 123 (27%) |
| Not at all confident (N=37) | 9 (4%) | 28 (6%) |
| Unsure (N=64) | 18 (7%) | 46 (10%) |

Note. Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

B9. Importance of actions taken by staff to help participants make new connections

| When you think of the things that staff did to help you make <u>new</u> connections through this activity, how important was it that staff: | Very important | Somewhat important | Not important | Staff did not do this |
|---|----------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Were friendly, which made it easier for you to get to know others (N=739) | 601 (81%) | 131 (18%) | 4 (<1%) | 3 (<1%) |
| Gave you time to talk with others during the activity (N=739) | 519 (70%) | 171 (23%) | 40 (5%) | 9 (1%) |
| Reminded you when the activity was scheduled (N=741) | 503 (68%) | 182 (25%) | 45 (6%) | 11 (1%) |
| Took time to introduce you to others (N=736) | 474 (64%) | 195 (26%) | 35 (5%) | 32 (4%) |
| Helped you connect with others outside of the activity (N=740) | 350 (47%) | 193 (26%) | 119 (16%) | 75 (10%) |
| Helped you get transportation to attend the activity (N=712) | 261 (37%) | 79 (11%) | 155 (22%) | 217 (30%) |

B10. Participant-identified staff actions that helped participants make new connections

The open-ended responses to this survey item were categorized into themes and counted. A few of the survey responses related to each theme are included. Quotes followed by an asterisk (*) indicate responses translated from Spanish.

Is there anything else that staff did to help you make new connections? (N=397)

Staff were friendly/nice/welcoming (N=39)

Staff was very inviting and friendly. Set a good energy and welcoming atmosphere. Thoughtful and caring.

Staff were very friendly which made it so easy to feel welcome.

She was just very welcoming and hilarious at the right moments!

Opportunities for discussion/conversation (N=26)

The conversations were easily started and continued throughout the classes.

Had an open dialogue during the class for everyone to talk and share experiences.

Group discussion and small group - the meal gave us time to really get to know each other and take off the stress of the day.

Opportunities to be around or get to know other people (N=21)

Being around other people. (N=2)

Introduce myself to other people from the community that I did not know.*

They help me to know and help each other...I made new friends.

Staff provided good information on the program activity (N=20)

Increased my interest by teaching me more about gardening.

They answered all the questions.*

Bringing together Master Gardeners, Extension Staff, Snap-Ed Staff, and community gardeners led to a greater sense of a community behind the community garden.

Other themes

Staff made introductions between participants (N=13)

Staff communicated with participants between activity sessions (N=11)

Sharing meals together (N=11)

Staff made the class fun or interesting (N=11)

Staff made connections to outside resources (N=10)

The activity itself brought people together (N=9)

The activity had a relaxing/welcoming environment (N=9)

Having child care support (N=7)

Staff were great in general (N=7)

Staff shared information on other similar activities or events (N=6)

B10. Participant-identified staff actions that helped participants make new connections (continued)

Other themes

Staff were supportive or motivational (N=5)

Staff provided activity reminders (N=5)

Transportation support (N=5)

Staff ask good questions in class (N=4)

Having icebreaker activities (N=4)

Everyone in the group was friendly/nice/welcoming (N=2)

Staff were non-judgmental or scheduling was consistent (N=2)

C. Participants' survey responses: Physical activity

C1. Physical activity topics reported by participants (N=661)

| During this activity, which of the following skills do you practice? | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Walking, biking, swimming, or other cardiovascular exercises | 395 | 60% |
| Being active with a group | 391 | 59% |
| Yoga, Tai Chi, or other relaxation/mindfulness activities | 248 | 38% |
| Being active by myself | 233 | 35% |
| Gardening | 149 | 23% |
| Strength or weight training | 135 | 20% |
| Sports or games such as soccer, bean bag toss, or 2-player Wii sports | 96 | 15% |
| Other | 55 | 8% |

Note. Respondents were able to choose multiple responses.

C2. Self-reported changes in physical activity among participants (N=649)

| Because of this activity, are you: | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| More physically active than six months ago | 402 | 62% |
| Doing about the same amount of physical activity as six months ago | 238 | 37% |
| Less physically active than six months ago | 9 | 1% |

C3. Percentage of participants reporting changes in physical activity, by their frequency of involvement

| Because of this activity, are you: | Approximately how many times did you participate in the Neighborhood Health Connection activity? | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low 2-3 (N=131) | Moderate 4-5 (N=170) | High 6 or more (N=348) |
| More physically active than six months ago (N=402) | 60 (46%) | 100 (59%)* | 242 (70%)** |
| Doing about the same amount of physical activity as six months ago (N=238) | 68 (52%) | 66 (39%)* | 104 (30%)** |
| Less physically active than six months ago (N=9) | 3 (2%) | 4 (2%) | 2 (1%) |

Note. Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Participants in each frequency group were significantly different than each other in terms of physical activity. Participants in the moderate group (attending 4-5 times) were significantly more likely than those in the low frequency group to say they were more physically active than 6 months ago. People that attended 6+ times were significantly more likely than both the low and moderate frequency groups to say they were more physically active than 6 months ago. Differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

C4. Percentage of participants reporting changes in physical activity, by their receipt of public support

| Because of this activity, are you: | Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care? | |
|--|---|---------------|
| | Yes (N=215) | No (N=385) |
| More physically active than six months ago (N=367) | 140 (65%) | 227 (59%) |
| Doing about the same amount of physical activity as six months ago (N=226) | 69 (32%) | 157 (40%)* |
| Less physically active than six months ago (N=7) | 6 (3%) | 1 (<1%) |

*Participants that do not receive public support are significantly more likely to say they are doing the same amount of physical activity than those who do receive public support. Differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

C5. Percentage of participants reporting at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day, by their receipt of public support

| During an average week, whether at work, at home, or anywhere else, how many days do you get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity? | Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care? | |
|---|---|---------------|
| | Yes (N=264) | No (N=503) |
| 0 days (N=35) | 16 (6%) | 19 (4%) |
| 1-2 days (N=232) | 99 (37%) | 133 (26%) |
| 3-4 days (N=300) | 89 (34%) | 211 (42%)* |
| 5-7 days (N=200) | 60 (23%) | 140 (28%) |

* Those not receiving public support were significantly more likely to say they were active 3-4 days a week than those receiving public support. Differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

D. Participants’ survey responses: Healthy eating

D1. Healthy eating activities reported by participants (N=619)

| During this activity, which of the following skills do you practice? | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| Healthy eating or nutrition | 542 | 88% |
| Cooking or food preparation | 392 | 63% |
| Eating healthy foods on a budget | 319 | 52% |
| Shopping for healthy foods | 319 | 52% |
| Gardening and how to grow food | 154 | 25% |
| Other | 49 | 8% |

Note. Respondents were able to choose multiple responses.

D2. Self-reported changes in eating habits among participants

| Because of this activity, did you make any changes to the way you eat? (N=614) | Number | Percent |
|---|--------|---------|
| Yes | 539 | 87% |
| No | 78 | 13% |
| If “Yes,” what changes have you made? (N=536) | | |
| Eating more vegetables | 441 | 82% |
| Eating more fruit | 364 | 68% |
| Cooking healthy meals more often | 329 | 61% |
| Drinking fewer sweetened beverages (e.g., soda, tea, coffee, or juice with added sugar) | 271 | 51% |
| Reading nutritional labels | 262 | 49% |
| Eating meals and snacks that are not too big in size | 250 | 47% |
| Eating more whole grains | 240 | 45% |
| Other | 33 | 6% |

Note. Respondents were able to choose multiple responses.

D3. Self-reported changes in healthy eating among participants (N=614)

| Because of this activity, do you eat healthy meals and snacks: | Number | Percent |
|--|--------|---------|
| More often than six months ago | 434 | 71% |
| About the same as six months ago | 144 | 24% |
| Less often than six months ago | 36 | 6% |

D4. Percentage of participants reporting changes in healthy eating, by their frequency of involvement

| Because of this activity, do you eat healthy meals and snacks: | Approximately how many times did you participate in the Neighborhood Health Connection activity? | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Low 2-3 (N=110) | Moderate 4-5 (N=179) | High 6 or more (N=325) |
| More often than six months ago (N=434) | 68 (62%) | 123 (69%) | 243 (75%)* |
| About the same as six months ago (N=144) | 36 (33%) | 47 (26%) | 61 (19%)* |
| Less often than six months ago (N=36) | 6 (6%) | 9 (5%) | 21 (7%) |

*People that went 6+ times were significantly more likely to say they ate healthy meals and snacks more often than 6 months ago compared to people who attended only 2-3 activities. Differences are statistically significant at p<.05.

D5. Percentage of participants reporting changes in healthy eating, by their receipt of public support

| Because of this activity, do you eat healthy meals and snacks: | Do you get any help from programs to help you afford health care, housing, food, or child care? | |
|--|---|---------------|
| | Yes (N=218) | No (N=362) |
| More often than six months ago (N=414) | 151 (69%) | 263 (73%) |
| About the same as six months ago (N=135) | 50 (23%) | 85 (24%) |
| Less often than six months ago (N=31) | 17 (8%) | 14 (4%) |

E. Participants’ overall experiences with the NHC activities

Participants were asked to share feedback about their programs and activities, such as barriers to participation, favorite part of the activity, and any further comments or thoughts. Participant quotes highlighted in this table are examples of the types of comments related to each theme. These may have been edited for confidentiality or clarity. Quotes followed by an asterisk (*) indicate responses translated from Spanish.

E1. Best part of the activity

When asked about the best part of taking part in the activity, participants liked the opportunities to socialize with other people, learn about health topics like nutrition and exercise, and try new activities. Some participants mentioned feeling better both physically and mentally after participating in activities.

What was the best part of taking part in this activity? (N=737)

Opportunity to socialize in general (N=193)

Being around other people. (N=5)

Finding a new friend, together time with my partner, and learning new recipes together.

Sharing experiences with other families of dementia patients and getting support from them.

Opportunity to exercise/be active (N=87)

Doing exercise. (N=3)

Learning that I enjoy yoga and have now enrolled in other classes.

Running with the crew!

Learning about healthier nutrition (N=76)

Learned new things – like healthy eating and what to look for when shopping for groceries.

I learned that I should not drink sodas.*

To know better the foods I should eat and to maintain my diabetes under control.*

Meeting new people (N=72)

Meeting new people. (N=4)

To meet new friends and for the kids to have more company with other kids.*

Taking a moment to step out of your comfort zone and meet new people. This group opens your eyes to people of all walks of life, and it’s incredible.

Enjoying the food, such as samples given or other peoples’ meals (N=66)

Enjoying someone else’s cooking.

Trying new foods and being with others and experiencing a healthy meal.

Good food, good conversations.

E1. Best part of the activity (continued)

What was the best part of taking part in this activity? (N=737)

Learning new things in general (N=61)

Getting some info needed.

I like the information because I was not aware of any of this.*

Very interesting and helpful. Learned so much I signed up for another class. Helps with weight loss and support is great.

Learning how to cook, including new recipes (N=58)

New recipes. Veggies I probably would not have tried before and putting foods and veggies together that I wouldn't thought to put with each other.

Enjoy[ing] cooking and learning different spices and how to use them. Meals are healthier.

Finding how to make different recipes with the produce that was provided to us.

Having fun/enjoying the activity (N=39)

Fun and hands on activities.

The best part was that my children had fun with all the activities.*

It was fun and helpful for my mental health.

Gardening (N=27)

I like to work at the garden. Enjoyed outside activities and meet new people.

Seeing my garden come to life. Also really enjoyed meeting and problem-solving with the other gardeners as well as learning from the master gardeners.

Go out during the summer and work at the garden.

Experiencing health improvements, such as losing weight or sleeping better (N=25)

I felt I slept better at night and I went from 1 pound to 2 pound weights. That was neat.

I have lowered my blood pressure medicine and I have fewer aches and pains.

Finding a balance and learning to ease my anxiety without medications.

Staff was great (N=22)

I looked forward to attending this class each week. The instructor shared her expertise and knowledge and she encouraged us. She made it fun!

The instructors were wonderful. Always felt physically better for participating in the class.

Great teachers! New ideas and topics! Networking and friendship building!

Feeling better, mentally or physically (N=21)

I really felt better after doing the yoga. It really helped my mind and body.

Feel better about myself.

Made me feel better. Met good people.

Opportunity to be outside (N=16)

Meeting new people – having fun outdoors.

Spending time with friends. Reasons to be active outside. Fun.

Being outside and running with others.

E1. Best part of the activity (continued)

What was the best part of taking part in this activity? (N=737)

Other themes

Everything (N=16)

Relaxing, such as taking time for oneself or practicing self-care (N=13)

Strengthening existing relationships (N=12)

Opportunity to get out of the house (N=11)

Trying new things (N=10)

Cooking (N=10)

E2. Participation barriers

Many participants noted that there were no barriers or challenges to participating (N=213) and a few said they attended all sessions (N=4). Common barriers that participants experienced were time conflicts and other obligations such as work or school or taking care of family members, health issues (both chronic and acute illnesses), weather, and transportation challenges.

What, if anything, made it hard for you to regularly participate in this activity? (N=516)

Time or time conflicts, such as appointments or classes (N=46)

Time.

I attend college classes right now, so sometimes activities are held when I'm at class.

Other obligations.

Work (N=45)

I work late into the evening.*

My work schedule can be hectic.

Being busy with work and other activities.

Health issues, such as mobility, getting sick, or having surgery (N=34)

Because of my weather related back arthritis, there were times that I didn't feel good enough to participate.

My knees are bad.

It was easy to participate. The times I missed was because of illness.

Busy schedule/life (N=31)

Schedule.

Yes I can't do everything because I'm too busy.

Over-scheduled life.

E2. Participation barriers (continued)

What, if anything, made it hard for you to regularly participate in this activity? (N=516)

Weather, such as rainy days or weather being too hot or too cold (N=24)

The rainy days.”

When it’s cold, I cannot go outdoors.*

The workouts were outside in the heat of the day in the middle of the summer. Some days it was up to 90 degrees and didn’t have a great option for a place to work out inside.

Transportation issues, such as lack of transit (N=22)

Transportation.

Money for buses from [house].

Just finding a ride to the location.

Family obligations, like taking care of children or older parents (N=21)

Family responsibility.

Mother was in nursing home.

Busy life – young children.

Other themes

Time of activity not being convenient (N=13)

Travel distance, like having a long drive (N=9)

Mental health, like depression or anxiety (N=8)

Travel/vacation (N=8)

Social components, like crowds or too much socializing (N=5)

Forgetting the activity (N=5)

Lack of motivation (N=4)

Activity specific challenges, such as keeping up with “homework” components (N=3)

E3. Additional comments or thoughts

Participants were asked if they had any additional thoughts or comments. Common themes include overall positive experiences with the program and program staff, hopes for the activities to continue, and recommendations for program improvement.

Do you have any other comments or thoughts? (N=468)

Program was good (N=56)

Everything was great and thank you for all the activities.*

This activity was great and really helped make us better leaders overall.

This was a great program. Thanks for supporting it. I will share with my friends.

Enjoying this activity, such as “I loved it” (N=53)

I loved this! It was hard but taught me a lot and pushed me.

It was an enjoyable experience and it was nice to meet people that I would not have met otherwise.

Love this program! Such a great staff who care so much about what they do. Learned a lot about regenerative farming and am glad to be a part of that.

Appreciation for the program or activity (N=48)

Thank you, Allina! This program developed little groups that help each other and gave experience in eating new healthy foods. The on-site provider offered wonderful, new foods in combination with familiar healthy foods. A wonderful program.

Thank you so much for supporting community events like this! It is so important to think about preventative healthcare and ways that community can actually contribute to positive health. Much appreciated and I hope the program continues.

I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to have fun with great people.

Keep the activity going (N=37)

I am hoping we can continue this in some manner. Taking time to get to know the people we work with is valuable.

Would love to see this continue!

I hope to see [this program] continue in our community.

Staff was great (N=31)

The two instructors were very positive and knowledgeable. They encourage everyone to refrain from competition and to do what you could according to the current physical shape you are in.

Great teacher and great class. Very positive environment.

Great staff! Great advice! Needs to be held more frequently.

Recommendations for improvements, as in ways the activity/program could be better in the future (N=23)

Might be helpful to alternate the days when it took place, making it easier for people who have second jobs to attend.

I would like to have more field trips and more group activity.

If you want more attendance, post on Facebook or advise how to connect to the schedule.

E3. Additional comments or thoughts (continued)

Do you have any other comments or thoughts? (N=468)

Liked the social aspect (N=18)

It was good to hang out with people that have concerns about the same things I do.

It was fun to be together with the group and share.

Love learning new things and meeting new people.

Other themes

Class was fun (N=14)

Would like to see other opportunities like this (N=10)

Hope the activity is offered again (N=9)

Program was information/educational (N=7)

Program was helpful (N=7)

Learned new things (N=6)

These activities are good for the community (N=6)

Enjoyed the gardening (N=5)

Enjoyed the food (N=5)

Would like to do this again (N=3)

Improvements in physical health (N=2)

The program created positive life changes (N=2)

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451 Lexington Parkway North
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104

651-280-2700 | www.wilderresearch.org

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