

Massachusetts Department of Public Health Success Stories



MASS IN MOTION METROWEST



Healthy Dining Comes to Metrowest

SUMMARY

In Framingham, Hudson and Marlborough, people are eating away from home more and more. With restaurant foods now higher than ever in calories, fat and sodium, MetroWest Moves saw an opportunity to offer many residents healthier options through the launch of their Healthy Dining program. Participating restaurants now offer lower calorie, lower sodium options that are smaller in portion size, helping customers order healthier choices when they're out to eat.

CHALLENGE

In the MetroWest area, approximately one in five people (21%) are either overweight or obese. This amount of excess weight can lead to serious chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. The cities and towns of the MetroWest area are booming with restaurants that have unique menus and innovative tastes. But restaurant foods are higher in calories, fat and sodium than ever before, and portion sizes are expanding every year. For example, in 1955 the average size of a hamburger was 4 ounces. Today, average hamburger sizes are tipping the scales at a whopping 12 ounces. Not only are sizes larger, but people are eating out more than they used to. In 1960, over a quarter of the money spent on food in the U.S. was on food eaten away from home. By 2011, the money spent on food eaten away from home jumped to nearly half.

SOLUTION

In September of 2012, MetroWest Moves (which covers Framingham, Hudson and Marlborough) launched its Healthy Dining Initiative and encouraged local restaurants to apply. Within several months, 20 restaurants completed applications and 15 were approved by the MetroWest Moves dietician.

MetroWest Moves used strict criteria to approve meals according to US Dietary Guidelines. A dietitian worked with the restaurant to create or modify at least three menu items that meet the recommended criteria for calories, fat, and sodium. MetroWest Moves is also working with a Portuguese-speaking dietitian to recruit Portuguese/Brazilian restaurants. "Including these restaurants ensures that we're reaching out to all of our residents and providing better access to healthy foods for everyone. Portuguese residents play a large and important role in our communities," said Amanda Ryder, Mass in Motion Coordinator.

"More and more, people are looking for healthy foods to eat, and it is not just the really health conscious people anymore. Families, corporations — they want healthy, too, but they don't have the time to cook for themselves."

STEVE DEMBRO
OWNER AND CHEF OF STEVIE'S
EATERY, MARLBOROUGH

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/massinmotion

PARTNERS

Allora Ristorante, Smyles Frozen Yogurt, Wildwood Steak House, Eagles All-American Grill, Stevie's, Feng Sushi, Old School House, Eggcetera Etc., Harvest Café, Horseshoe Pub, Main St. Café, O'Connell's Pub, Rail Trail Flatbread, La Cantina, Zeta Pizzeria & Kitchen

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RESULTS

Restaurants that are approved display the MetroWest Moves Healthy Dining Options decal in their windows, along with signs promoting their approved healthy meals. These signs include the amount of sodium, fat, and calories in each Healthy Dining meal.

More diners are asking for, and expecting, healthier options on restaurant menus, and residents of the MetroWest area are now able to choose from a growing number of local restaurants. Additional restaurants have caught wind of the success of this initiative, and applications for participation in Healthy Dining Options continue to pour in.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

MetroWest Moves maintains frequent contact with participating restaurants and is launching additional efforts to expand the initiative to more restaurants in the three communities.



Framingham ★ Hudson ★ Marlborough

MetroWest Moves



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