

The Pitt County Poster Project: A Partnership for Health

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Abstract

Upon the identification of health themes critical to Pitt County, a poster campaign was developed to promote good health habits. The purpose of this article is to briefly describe the steps involved in initiating a poster campaign involving numerous partnerships. The article also suggests impact implications.

Many communities are faced with the challenge of how to effectively promote good health behaviors. One specific challenge is how to reach a wide audience with appropriate health messages when resources are limited. The Pitt County Poster Project was intended to identify and increase community awareness about specific health behaviors through the use of partnerships and various media venues.

The theoretical framework for the project was the Stages of Change Model (Prochaska, DiClemente, and Norcross 1992). This model is based upon the premise that individuals vary in their willingness or readiness to change. Increasing an individual's awareness of appropriate health behaviors could move individuals who are in the contemplation or preparations stage to the action stage, the most desirable stage.

The following describes the five steps that were involved in completing this project.

Step 1. Forming an Advisory Board

The Family and Consumer Educator (FCE) of the Pitt County Cooperative Extension Service (CES) convened a focus group that included representatives from East Carolina University, North Carolina State University, the Brody School of Medicine, the Pitt County Health Department, Pitt County Memorial Hospital, and the Pitt County Schools. This group identified the following health themes as critical to Pitt County: exercise, handwashing, designated drivers,

water consumption, seat belts, bicycle helmets, soda consumption, screenings for mental and physical health, and healthful diet.

Step 2. Designing the posters

The Pitt County FCE presented the project to the Pitt Community College (PCC) graphic arts department and its students. As part of a class requirement, the PCC students developed poster designs for three of the focus group's identified health themes: designated drivers, water consumption, and handwashing.

Step 3. Recruiting a Sponsor

The Pitt County FCE Advisory Committee reviewed 50 designs submitted by the students and selected a few of the designs. These were then presented to Nutrition Partners, a subcommittee of Pitt Partners for Health. Nutrition Partners made the final design selections for the handwashing and water consumption posters and funded their printing. East Carolina University selected designs for the designated driver posters and funded them.

Step 4. Poster Distribution

Five hundred laminated copies of the three designated drivers posters were printed. ECU and PCC agreed to post these 500 laminated posters in school buses, bars, apartment complexes, and dorm housing. Five hundred laminated copies of the five water consumption and handwashing posters were printed. The Pitt County Cooperative Extension Service, in partnership with other agencies and organizations, placed the posters in bathrooms at the following locations: county and city office buildings, airport, bowling alley, malls, restaurants, theater, school cafeterias, hospital, churches, health centers, recreation centers, and libraries.

Step 5. Poster Promotion

A joint television appearance by the FCE of the Pitt County CES and a representative from the Pitt County Memorial Hospital generated community awareness. As a result of this project, Pitt Partners for Health selected and funded the printing of poster designs for two billboards. The space on the two billboards was donated to promote the health behaviors of using a designated driver and increasing water consumption.

The poster project has impacted the community. As a result of this project, Pitt County Memorial Hospital (PCMH) has funded and distributed 3,000 additional handwashing posters that were selected from the poster project. For 2003 National Nutrition Month, Nutrition Partners has requested CES to repeat the project using the identified critical health themes of exercise and healthful diet. Six hundred posters designed by the PCC graphic design class were printed. A

professor with the Brody School of Medicine embedded the water consumption posters in a PowerPoint presentation she delivered to the ADA. ECU added the designated drivers posters to an alcohol blackboard class ECU freshmen are required to take. In addition, restaurants have requested posters.

This project illustrates the value of using partnerships to effectively promote health behaviors. The value placed upon the poster messages by many community businesses, agencies, and offices is reflected by their willingness to display the posters and their financial support of the effort. This delivery strategy of messages about health behaviors can reach a large number of people at minimal cost.

References

Prochaska, J.O., C.C. DiClemente, and J.C. Norcross. 1992. In search of how people change applications to addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist* 47(9):1102-1114.

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