

Tanner Health System | Carrollton, Georgia

Tanner Health System launched Get Healthy, Live Well (GHLW), a multisector coalition and campaign to align community partners and engage residents to improve their health. Several GHLW interventions emphasize promoting healthy behaviors, with evidence-based programs to help adults and children make healthy changes and prevent or control chronic diseases. GHLW has launched an automated referral process in Tanner’s electronic medical record and created a mobile app to promote healthy food choices. Working with local schools, faith-based organizations and other community partners, GHLW has made an impact in the community, including increasing residents’ physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption and decreasing adult smoking rates.

Overview

Based in Carrollton, Georgia, Tanner Health System is a nonprofit, regional health system consisting of five hospitals and a large multispecialty physicians group, serving a predominantly rural population in western Georgia and eastern Alabama. In 2011, Tanner’s board members decided it needed to invest more

effort improving the overall health of its community. The health system sees a large number of patients with heart disease, diabetes and related disorders.



To promote community wellness issues, Tanner organizers had traditionally held health fairs; however, they knew from experience that fairs by themselves had minimal long-term impact. Though health fairs may lead to upticks in residents getting their blood pressure or blood sugar checked, it was hard to know if those residents took further steps, such as cutting back on fried foods or taking up a regular walking habit, to prevent or control chronic disease.

To convince individuals to adopt healthy behaviors, Tanner leaders understood that they needed to go bigger and broader to address the complex interplay of environmental, social and economic factors that influence population health. In 2012,

Tanner Health System launched Get Healthy, Live Well. GHLW has systematically worked to increase the number of residents adopting healthy behaviors by pursuing policy changes, connecting individuals with easy-to-access wellness programs and collaborating with local churches, schools and other organizations to integrate healthy choices into everyday life.

Approach

To guide its work, GHLW adopted a collective impact approach, which calls for a flexible and decentralized multisector approach for social change. Following this framework, GHLW used these principles to align community partners and engage residents to improve health:

- **A common agenda.** Tanner Health System regularly conducts community health needs assessments to better understand health barriers in its primary service area and to set priorities. For fiscal years 2017–2019, Tanner Health System’s community health implementation strategy is focused on improving access to care, chronic disease prevention and management, behavioral health, and health education and literacy.
- **A backbone organization.** In 2011, Tanner Health System created a community health division. The 4.5 full-time employees in this division

coordinate GHLW's programs and committees, seek grant funding and train community leaders to provide wellness education and programs. GHLW also is steered by a leadership council with representatives from various community sectors and groups.

- **Mutually reinforcing activities.**

The GHLW coalition has more than 20 committees, task forces and think tanks that are simultaneously pursuing GHLW priorities in specific sectors or for certain aspects of health, such as behavioral health and health education/ literacy. Each volunteer group enlists key community leaders to identify and roll out specific strategies. While these groups share experiences and talent when needed, they focus mostly on improving health in their assigned areas of expertise, whether that is municipal policy or tobacco cessation.

- **Shared measurement.** GHLW uses an outside evaluator to measure the success of every initiative.

- **Ongoing communication.**

On a quarterly basis, all GHLW committees meet to share progress and exchange best practices. In addition, GHLW has a full-time communications staff person who keeps the initiatives visible in local media.

Interventions

Several Get Healthy, Live Well programs place a special emphasis on improving healthy behaviors.

School-based initiatives. By working with local schools, GHLW encourages children to get physical activity, eat a nutritious diet and adopt other healthy habits. Specific school-based strategies have included:



- A traveling original theatrical production, called Eat a Rainbow, that teaches students about healthy nutrition.
- A Safe Routes to School resolution, which has resulted in infrastructure changes (i.e., bike racks and safe crossings) and policy changes that have made it more practical for children to walk or bike to school.
- Training for teachers on how to incorporate 30 minutes of physical activity into students' school day.

Most recently, GHLW launched Kids 'N the Kitchen for K–8 students. The program supplies elementary schools with a fully equipped mobile kitchen — a cart that can be moved from classroom to classroom for healthy cooking demonstrations and food tastings. In addition, some schools are integrating cooking examples into math, science and other lessons as a way to drive home nutrition messages.

Faith-based wellness. Recognizing the significant role that churches play in the lives of community members, GHLW is working closely with faith-based organizations to encourage healthy behaviors. Currently, 14 churches are actively implementing strategies, such as tobacco-free policies or rules against fried foods at church gatherings, church-based community gardens, physical activity groups, and

Lessons Learned

- When various community organizations come together to address a shared vision, they can collaboratively identify which strengths the others bring to the table. Each partner then can concentrate on what they do best — and not worry about having to do everything.
- Local faith-based organizations represent a substantial — and largely untapped — voluntary resource for small, rural communities.
- Using a train-the-trainer approach can help spread health programming across large areas with limited hospital staff involvement. Three staff members in Tanner Health System's community health division are "master trainers" who train community volunteers to teach many of the classes offered to residents.

wellness challenges. For example, the Get Healthy, Live Well Tailgate Cook-Off is a wellness challenge to see who can devise the healthiest cookout menu at a local university football game.

GHLW staff and volunteers enlist church ministers, organize wellness councils at each congregation and conduct pre-and post-health assessments with church members to motivate healthy changes. Using a train-the-trainer model, GHLW staff teach church lay leaders about nutrition, diabetes management and other health topics so those volunteers can hold workshops for other parishioners. Health messages also are incorporated into weekly services and church activities.

Community-clinical linkages. GHLW regularly offers five evidence-based programs to help adults and children make healthy changes and prevent or control chronic diseases:

- **Freshstart tobacco cessation**
- **Diabetes Prevention**
- **Living Well with Chronic Disease**
- **Living Well with Diabetes**
- **Healthy Kids, a child obesity prevention program**

To reach more residents with these programs, in early 2016 GHLW launched an automated referral process in Tanner Health System's electronic medical record. This allows physicians and other providers to easily refer a patient to these programs. Since the referral process launched, more than 50 providers have referred more than 1,500 patients to the programs. Community residents also can sign up for the programs, which are open to all.

Healthy food access. To help residents choose and access healthy foods, GHLW launched a "Menu It" app, which residents can download onto a smartphone or tablet to easily compare the calories and nutrients of various menu items at local restaurants. There are currently more than 2,500 registered users of Menu It.

GHLW has trained more than 60 volunteer instructors on the evidence-based Cooking Matters program, which teaches families how to prepare healthy and tasty foods on a limited income. To date, more than 300 low-income families have taken the class from the volunteer instructors trained through GHLW. The classes are held at Boys & Girls Clubs, housing authorities, churches and other local venues.

Impact

Over the past five years, Tanner's Get Healthy, Live Well initiative has made a significant difference in the health of many residents in its region.

- **At faith-based organizations, congregants are reporting increases in their physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption, according to pre- and post-intervention surveys.**
- **More than 25 local organizations, including clinics, universities, schools and housing authorities, have implemented tobacco-free policies, affecting more than 60,000 individuals.**
- **Adult smoking rates in Carroll County declined from 23% in 2013 to 18% in 2017.**
- **Living Well program participants are reporting increases in exercise frequency, fruit and vegetable consumption and self-care confidence, according to pre- and post-intervention surveys.**
- **More than 70 new community garden plots were launched through a "Come Grow with Us!" campaign.**

Next Steps

A GHLW think tank is conducting an in-depth study in one county to learn more about the environmental, social and economic factors influencing residents' health. One potential intervention being considered to help at-risk individuals is deploying emergency medical technicians (EMTs) during their non-busy times to conduct home visits. The EMTs would take blood pressure readings and other vitals and connect individuals to GHLW programs and classes.

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