

Feeding Lee County One Family At A Time

The Community Market of East Alabama

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The Community Market of East Alabama is located in Opelika, Alabama. It is a grocery store style market that is supplied from the donations to the East Alabama Food Bank. Families in Lee County facing food insecurity are able to shop at the Community Market up to five times each year. After thorough interviews and multiple hours volunteering, a specific proposal has been created to bridge the gaps that the Community Market of East Alabama is facing. First, an increase in funding is needed for expansion of the building and purchasing more coolers. Secondly, more staff and volunteers are needed to aid the market in running more smoothly. Lastly, an increase in nutrition education for the staff and shoppers is a crucial part in the process of improving the overall wellbeing of the Community Market of East Alabama.

Introduction

The Community Market of East Alabama is a non-profit affiliate of the Food Bank of East Alabama. Located in Opelika, Alabama, it is a grocery store style market that allows for low income families in the Lee County area to shop for supplemental groceries multiple times each year. Thousands of families benefit from the Community Market through programs that have been set in place like Baby Manna and Brown Bag. However, the impact is limited due to a lack of funding, volunteers, and expertise. The Community Market is confined to a small building in Opelika with limited shelf space and coolers. Also, there are only two paid staff members, so there is a large void that volunteers must fill. Nutrition education is a topic that we believe should be discussed with the shoppers, but there is no education at this time due to lack of expertise. Each of the authors are obtaining a degree in nutrition from Auburn University. They have worked closely with the staff and shoppers at the Community Market and have seen the needs that can be met. Each week, they volunteer at the market aiding in administrative tasks, checkout processes, and communicating with shoppers and other volunteers. Throughout their nutrition degrees, they have participated in courses such as nutrition education, public health nutrition, and lifecycle nutrition. They have a deep understanding of nutrition that can be applied directly to the Community Market and its needs. Food security is a priority to them, and they believe that the wellbeing of the community is directly impacted by this. The proposal was carefully crafted to combat the gaps in funding, staff, and expertise of the Community Market of East Alabama. Due to the reasons above, they believe that they are adequately prepared to conduct this proposal.

Literature Review

The book “Effective Fundraising for Nonprofits: Real-world strategies that work” was particularly important when creating the fundraising goals. It mentioned specific ways to motivate people and organizations to donate to the cause. Things such as making fundraising fun and creating a personal relationship with donors are very important. Fundraising is an intricate topic, and much was learned throughout this book.

In this study, “Child Food Insecurity Increases Risks Posed by Household Food Insecurity to Young Children’s Health,” children who were food secure and children who were food insecure were compared in overall child health status. It was found that food insecure children faced more health issues, and the number of sick children only slightly decreased with aid from food stamp programs. The study would have been more thorough if a wider age gap had been considered.

The study “Favorable Impact of Nutrition Education on California WIC Families” focused on the impact of nutrition education on families that used the WIC program. It was found that the families started to make healthier food choices after being educated on the benefits of certain foods. The study was limited to the state of California and families that used WIC. It would be beneficial to look at a larger population and families with varying incomes.

The peer reviewed article “Rates of and characteristics associated with food insecurity differ among undergraduate and graduate students at a large public university in the Southeast United States” was very interesting to review as it conducted a study that compared the rates of food insecurity in graduate and undergraduate students in the southern/southeastern part of the U.S. the study results showed that the prevalence

of food insecurity was at least 7% higher in undergraduate students when compared to graduate students. This is useful for insight into the proposal because the Community Market does not only serve community members outside of schooling, but the entire community.

In the article “Associations of Household Food Insecurity With Academic Outcomes in Early Adolescents.” It reviews and describes the correlation in children with food insecurity and how that affects them later in life, specifically with academic outcomes. The findings of this study were that there was a direct correlation with food insecurity and lower academic skills over time. This is valuable to the grant proposal to show how important children and families are within the Community Market and identifies that as a specific need.

The article titled “Impact of food pantry donations on diet of a low-income population” it reviews the way that food donations are essential to nutrition increases in low income populations. This is a vital source in the grant proposal to show how much the Community Market is vital to the community in Lee County.

In the article “Development of a Nutrition Education Intervention for Food Bank Clients” it explores the idea and data behind the resources that can be made available for food banks and how they can impact the population that they serve. This is important for the grant proposal as they look at developing nutrition education materials and their effectiveness for the Community Market.

In the article “Unreliable and Difficult-to-Access Food for Those in Need: A Qualitative and Quantitative Study of Urban Food Pantries” it addresses the impact that food pantries can have on food insecure populations. This is important to the grant

proposal because it looks at how beneficial these organizations are to helping those who may be facing food insecurity. This then helps to recognize how important the expansion of the Community Market could be on accessibility of food to the Lee County area.

In the article “Exploring the Gap: Food Insecurity and Resource Engagement” it explains how impactful and important resources are for food insecure populations. It discusses the gap that comes into play with the provision and actual implementation of resources. This is important to take into account with our grant proposal as this gap can affect the resources and should be considered in the methods and evaluation.

In the article “A systematic review of food pantry-based interventions in the USA” it gives an overview of the impact of food-pantry interventions through looking at various different studies done on this impact. This shows the importance of the Community Market in the Lee County community through the outcomes of these studies.

Objectives

Objective 1: Community Market Expansion

To expand the community market’s outreach and output to the community through raising funds for a new location and building.

Process 1: To raise the funding for said expansion, we will raise money for building expansion through a GoFundMe.

Outcome 1: This would allow for the community market to have more space for more coolers, freezers, storage, and people to come in.

Impact 1: More growth of this organization and increase their outreach to the Lee County community, because more food will be able to be held in the community market. Therefore, more food will be distributed to citizens and community members in need.

Objective 2: Facilitation of Increased Staff

Facilitate/hire more staff to adjust to the bigger space, we will raise funding for more full-time staff through a recurring fundraising event.

Process 2: Organize a reoccurring fundraising event that the Community Market can put on for years to come.

Outcome 2: Increased staff could help with flexibility of volunteers, as well as structure and accessibility to the organization as a whole.

Impact 2: Creating a more permanent staff will allow more schedule consistency, and job assignments. This will allow more efficiency of the community market with supplying food to the community by more consistent management.

Objective 3: Increase Nutrition Education

To educate this population on nutrition education, we will create a partnership with the undergraduate dietetics and internship program at Auburn University to create collaboration assignments and volunteer opportunities to help the community market with resources.

Process 3: Email and contact Auburn University Dietetics Program Director, Dr. Molaison, and Internship Director, Professor Moreman, to coordinate an internship partnership related to nutrition education/public health and assignments for certain classes such as nutrition education and public health to do a project and volunteer directly for the community market.

Outcome 3: Increase nutrition knowledge to this community through offering quick and easy meal guides along with other nutrition resources, as well as hands-on volunteer work.

Impact 3: Allow Community Markets to have involvement in campus and community resources, increase nutrition knowledge and education to community and within the Community Market.

Methods

Community Market Expansion

Method: We will gain funds for the building expansion of Community Markets through first, creating a GoFundMe. This GoFundMe will detail the mission and service of the Community Market, as well as specific needs that need to be met and how they will be achieved through the donations of money. The GoFundMe will be shared on all Community Market social media platforms, fliers will be put out into the community and on campus, and the volunteers will also help spread the information personally, whether that is via social media or in person advertising/networking. We will set up the GoFundMe with a certain target marker that will sufficiently provide materials, property, and land for building expansion. This GoFundMe will initially be evaluated 6 months after it is published, and then it will be decided how long it should stay up, based on donations received and advertisement reach. We will collect data and progress at the two month, four month, and six month time points, with most evaluation being done after six months.

Facilitation of Increased Staff

Method: Organize a reoccurring fundraising event that the Community Market can put on for years to come. This could be an event such as a farmers market, since many volunteers have farms and regularly donate produce and baked goods to the Community Market. This event could be called the Community Market Farmer's Market and could be held in the fall and spring, and would be open to every member of the community who would like to attend. Local farmers could contribute local food from the past season that they do not use, that would otherwise go to waste, and volunteers could contribute baked goods and other types of food to sell. All of the money/proceeds from this could go directly to the Community Market's fund for at least 2-3 more members of a full time staff, to assist their current staff members of the Community Market Coordinator, Cindy Duff, and the warehouse director, Yolanda. Our data time points for this method will be after the Spring 2024 Community Market Farmers Market, to assess funds collected and community member attendance. This will allow us to evaluate if this fundraising event was successful, or if we should explore other options.

Increase Nutrition Education

Method: Increase Nutrition Education by coordinating a partnership with the DPD and master's/internship program at Auburn University. This would require contact and coordination with the DPD Director, Dr. Molaison, and the Dietetic Internship Director, Mrs. Moreman. This would ideally look like multiple classes, having a required service learning assignment that requires volunteering at the Community Market. It could also involve "out-of-office" work such as creating fliers and meal plans. Moreover, it could also involve one or more interns working directly with the Community Market during their Public Health rotations during their dietetic internship. They would complete tasks

such as increasing health efficacy and access within the Community Market. This would increase exposure exponentially for the Community Market, as well as increase nutrition education and knowledge to the public. We would assess the efficacy of this partnership after one semester of implementation, and take surveys from both the students, and the Community Market staff on adjustments to be made and progress.

Evaluation

Evaluation of Objective 1: The increase in fundraising through the GoFundMe for expansion could be evaluated using quantitative data. This way we can look at the funds that have been raised and budget them toward expansion for a new building with more coolers, freezers, and storage space. This evaluation is crucial because it will directly impact the accessibility for the Community Market to grow and accommodate more volunteers, more resources, and more people in the community.

Evaluation of Objective 2: This increase in fundraising could be measured through quantitative data after the implementation of an annual fundraising event. Specifically, this data will provide us with more information pertaining to how much additional staff could be hired to help facilitate the daily work of the Community Market. This fundraising through the annual event can open up the opportunity for more full-time staff, which takes the burden off of solely volunteers. As the Community Market hopes to continue to expand and grow, its need for staff follows. This fundraising would allow the Community Market to hire more people on full-time, creating a more stable staff while still utilizing the very valuable volunteers in the community.

Evaluation of Objective 3: The increase in nutrition education could be measured through both qualitative and quantitative data. This objective can be measured through

quantitative data showing an increase in nutrition education resources available at the Community Market. While the qualitative data can be found through surveys given to Community Market volunteers and members to assess an increase in knowledge of nutrition due to these educational resources implemented. This addition of nutrition education can allow for foundational knowledge to be more available to the community of Lee County and specifically the population of people coming to the Community Market. It also will impact Auburn University as it partners with the nutrition program in order for students to create some of these education materials. This partnership will be beneficial for the students' education, the Community Market's use of the materials, and also will allow for more students on Auburn's campus to know more about the Community Market in general.

Timeline

Community Market Expansion Timeline:

December 2023: Assess needs such as specific areas where funding is needed, how big the future building must be, estimate how much the rental of a bigger building/land would cost, and then decide the GoFundMe donation goal for the six month marker.

January 2024: Create GoFundme, add description and goals, create fliers and posters, post fliers around campus and within the community, share GoFundMe on Community Market social media and encourage volunteers to do the same.

January 2024-June 2024: Continued donations to GoFundMe

June 2024: Assess donations and where that correlates to target goal, evaluate if and how long GoFundMe should stay active, evaluate if more advertisement is needed.

Facilitation of Increased Staff Timeline:

January 2024: Plan Community Market Farmers Market, reach out to local farmers and reach out to volunteers and gather an estimate of how much food will be able to be sold to the community.

February 2024: Assess goals for Community Market Farmers Market such as goal food sold and goal profit.

February 2024: Advertisement of Community Market Farmers Market through fliers, on social media, and encouraging volunteers to share information about fundraising event.

March 2024: Hold Community Market Farmers Market

March 2024: Evaluate success of Community Market Farmers Market through amount of food sold, community attendance and profit gain.

April 2024: Decide how many staff can be hired from funds raised, or if one or more events need to occur to facilitate staff hire.

Increase Nutrition Education Timeline:

December 2024: Coordinate with DPD and Internship directors at Auburn University to implement program and partnership. Hold meeting and state goals of partnership and specific requirements/assignment options and activities for the coming spring semester.

January 2024: Hopeful implementation of partnership, volunteer and intern orientation and job responsibilities.

April 2024: Survey created and completed by nutrition students as well as Community Market staff regarding progress made, impact made, and general assessment of the implementation of partnership.

May 2024: Analyze and evaluate results of survey and partnership of nutrition education implementation.

Appendices

Logic Model: Social Determinants of Health

Evaluation/Data Collection Tool:

Data Collection to conduct/create grant proposal: Thorough interviews with Cindy Duff, direct tables and charts from her, direct needs that she expressed for the Community Market. This includes quantitative data and qualitative data.

Proposal Data Collection: Quantitative data collection through funds raised, qualitative evaluation through peer and community feedback.

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