

Healthy Tidbits Program Evaluation Study



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Executive Summary

The Healthy Tidbits Program is a community capacity building initiative that involves senior volunteers in planning and implementing food demonstrations and taste test booths at neighbourhood food depots within the City of London. This program is a collaborative effort among the London Community Resource Centre (LCRC), Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), and Healthy Living Partnership Middlesex London. Other partners that have provided ongoing support for this initiative include Brescia University College and neighbourhood food depots affiliated with the London Food Bank.

In February 2007, funding from the New Horizons for Seniors Program was obtained to establish the Healthy Tidbits Program. The main objectives were:

- To encourage seniors to contribute their skills, experience and wisdom in support of social well-being in their community by facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills between seniors and users of their local neighbourhood food depot.
- To promote the ongoing involvement of seniors in their communities to reduce their risk of social isolation by engaging them in activities in their neighbourhoods, increasing their interaction with others in their community as well as developing a network with the seniors involved at other neighbourhood depots.

By the end of Summer 2007, senior volunteers were recruited to the program, and planning for the food demonstrations and taste test booths was well underway. In November and December 2007, food demonstrations and taste test booths were established at two local neighbourhood food depots.

Evaluation Plan

As one of the program partners, MLHU was contacted by the LCRC in January 2008 for assistance with an evaluation of the Healthy Tidbits Program. A MLHU Public Health Dietitian and a MLHU Program Evaluator were engaged to collaborate in designing and conducting the evaluation with the London Community Resource Center.

An evaluation plan was developed in order to capture the lessons learned and the impact of the program on senior volunteers. The reporting

requirements from the funding agency, New Horizons for Seniors Program, shaped the purpose of the evaluation and the main evaluation questions. The following evaluation purposes were established:

- To gather the experiences of the volunteers and the program coordinator who were involved in planning and running the program.
- To identify the challenges encountered by the volunteers and the program coordinator and to identify possible areas for improvement.
- To identify changes that may have occurred in volunteers' lives as a result of their participation in the program.

Methodology

An evaluation plan was developed which included the following methods:

- Tracking of data related to activities and participation as collected by senior volunteers and the program coordinator
- A focus group with volunteers to gather their experiences of being involved in the program and lessons learned in the beginning stages of the initiative
- An in-depth interview with the program coordinator.

Findings

A total of 14 volunteers were involved in the program, including 12 senior volunteers and 2 students. Between November 2007 and March 2008, a total of 8 food demonstrations and taste test booths were offered at two local neighbourhood food depots.

The focus group and interview provided participants with opportunities to reflect on their experiences of planning and implementing the program. Many lessons learned and suggestions for change were discussed by the volunteers and the Project Coordinator. Senior volunteers also highlighted how their involvement in the program has impacted their lives, including changes in knowledge that have occurred, and further involvement in other volunteer positions within the community.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for ongoing program development have been generated from focus group and interview feedback for consideration by the staff and volunteers involved in the Healthy Tidbit program:

Recruitment and Retention:

1. Develop a recruitment strategy for engaging new senior volunteers.
2. Indicate to recruited volunteers that program planning may take longer than anticipated but working with a vulnerable community requires development of trust and rapport building to ensure success.
3. Continue with volunteer recruitment to ensure ongoing success and to meet community needs.
4. Explore different ways in which seniors can be recruited for participation in the Healthy Tidbits Program.
5. Provide opportunities for volunteers to learn about the process of community development.
6. Continue to encourage feedback from senior volunteers and involve seniors in opportunities to express their concerns in a formalized way (e.g. participation at the food depot network group) in an effort to demonstrate how their participation is valued and viewed as an asset to the operation of the food depots overall.

Promotion:

7. Explore different ways in which the Healthy Tidbits Program can be promoted in the community (marketing opportunities etc.).
8. Create different ways in which food demonstrations can incorporate education opportunities for food depot clients (e.g. food label reading, costing of recipes, etc.).
9. Explore ways in which food demonstrations can be more creative and engaging of clientele.
10. Consider developing a poster or banner for the taste test booths in order to create an identity for the program and provide some visual appeal.
11. Explore the development of a strategy to inform food depot clients of up and coming recipes for the taste test booths.

12. Explore the option of offering cooking classes to food depot clients.
13. Investigate an approach to determine types of food hamper products that are not being utilized by food depot clients, and subsequently develop recipes that incorporate these products for the taste test booths.

Infrastructure:

14. Ensure proper infrastructure is available to operate effective cooking demonstrations and taste test booths.
15. Work with food depots to improve infrastructure issues experienced by Healthy Tidbits senior volunteers.

Administration of Healthy Tidbits:

16. Contact MLHU staff offering the food handler training program to determine whether an abbreviated and adapted version of the course could be developed for training volunteers in such programs as the Healthy Tidbit program.
17. Adapt or modify the food handler training program to satisfy the basic food handler training requirements while accurately reflecting the possible issues arising in a community-based kitchen.
18. Establish ground rules within volunteer groups to ensure equal contribution to program development by all volunteers, based on their comfort level, skill contribution, and interest in participating.
19. Finalize the Terms of Reference for the program in order to provide a description of the overall purpose and structure of the program.
20. Establish one representative of the Healthy Tidbit group to attend the neighbourhood food depot meetings.
21. Consider sharing feedback with neighbourhood food depot staff/volunteers about the room arrangement of the Kinsmen site.

Future Program Development and Evaluation:

22. Explore the impact of the Healthy Tidbits Program on the food bank recipients through future evaluation studies.

Introduction

This document reports the results of an evaluation of the Healthy Tidbits Program. The program is a collaborative effort between the London Community Resource Center, Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), and Healthy Living Partnership Middlesex London. Other partners that have provided ongoing support for this initiative include Brescia University College, and neighbourhood food depots affiliated with the London Food Bank.

In February 2007, funding from the New Horizons for Seniors Program was obtained to establish the Healthy Tidbits Program. The main objectives as identified in the grant proposal were:

- To encourage seniors to contribute their skills, experience and wisdom in support of social well-being in their community by facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills between seniors and users of their local neighbourhood food depot.
- To promote the ongoing involvement of seniors in their communities to reduce their risk of social isolation by engaging them in activities in their neighbourhoods, increasing their interaction with others in their community as well as developing a network with the seniors involved at other neighbourhood depots.

As one of the program partners, the MLHU, and specifically the Research, Education, Evaluation and Development (REED) Services was contacted in January 2008 for assistance with an evaluation of the Healthy Tidbits Program. In mid-February 2008, an initial meeting with a MLHU Program Evaluator, Executive Director of London Community Resource Center, and a MLHU Public Health Dietitian was held to plan for the evaluation. The funding parameters required an evaluation report to be completed by the beginning of April 2008. As a result, a small-scale evaluation was developed due to the time-limited nature of the evaluation (i.e. 7 weeks to develop and conduct the evaluation from start to completion). This evaluation included a multi-method, multi-informant approach in order to provide the necessary and sufficient information to the funding agency regarding the process and progress of the program, and to provide information on lessons learned for those involved in the ongoing planning and implementation of the program. Administrative data were collected by the Program Coordinator and volunteers to track program activities and

participation. A focus group was held with senior volunteers and student volunteers. An in-depth interview was also held with the Program Coordinator.

This report is organized in the following way: The *Background* section summarizes the development of the Healthy Tidbits Program and provides a description of the main objectives of the program; the *Evaluation Design and Methods* section describes the purposes of the evaluation, evaluation questions, methods, data sources and analytic procedures involved in the evaluation; the *Findings* section presents the results of the evaluation; the *Discussion* section summarizes and discusses the key findings of the evaluation; the *Study Limitations* section highlights the limitations of the evaluation; finally, the *Recommendations* section offers a list of recommendations based on the evaluation findings.

Background

The initial concept for the Healthy Tidbits Program was based on the experiences of a taste test booth pilot program. This demonstration booth was established at the St. Lawrence Presbyterian Church, which is one of the local neighbourhood food depots in the City of London. The MLHU Public Health Dietitian had initiated this taste test booth in 2006 as part of the operational plans of the Healthy Living Partnership of Middlesex-London, whose goal is to provide the Middlesex-London community with health promotion and prevention initiatives that focus on the prevention of chronic disease.

The taste test booth program received a favourable response from users of the neighbourhood food depot. After discussions between the MLHU Public Health Dietitian and the Executive Director of LCRC, both members of the Healthy Living Partnership Middlesex London, the idea for engaging seniors in the planning and delivery of food demonstration and taste test booths (note: the terms food demonstration and taste test booths are used interchangeably) at neighbourhood food depots was established. They decided that taste test booths led by seniors would be one way to engage members of the community who have many valuable life experiences and skills to share with others. Funding for the program was successfully obtained from the New Horizons for Seniors Program in February 2007. According to the Human Resources and Social Development Canada (2008), “the New Horizons for Seniors Program helps to ensure that seniors are able to benefit from and contribute to the quality of life in their community through their social participation and active living”. Funding is available to non-profit organizations through this program “...for projects that encourage seniors to contribute to their communities by sharing their skills, wisdom and experience and helping to reduce isolation” (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2008).

Once funding was obtained, a Program Coordinator was hired to plan and coordinate the program. Activities were initiated to recruit senior volunteers. However, this process included some unforeseen challenges and took longer than anticipated. By the end of the summer of 2007, the Program Coordinator had vacated the position, and the Executive Director of the London Community Resource Center assumed the program coordination roles and responsibilities. Following newspaper articles in the *Londoner* and the

London Free Press, several senior volunteers were recruited for the program. An initial orientation and planning meeting was held in August 2007 with subsequent planning meetings to follow. In November 2007, the first food demonstrations and taste test booths facilitated by senior volunteers were established.

An evaluation of the Healthy Tidbits Program was developed as a requirement of the funder. In February 2008, the MLHU Public Health Dietitian and the MLHU Program Evaluator were engaged to collaborate in designing and conducting the evaluation. One of the initial steps in planning the evaluation involved the development of a program theory (see Appendix A). The process and outcome of developing the program theory assisted with the tasks of focusing the evaluation and identifying key evaluation questions.

The two priority populations for the Healthy Tidbit Program are the senior volunteers, and the users of the food bank. Due to the nature of the funding requirements and the time restraints for the evaluation, the perspectives of the senior volunteers and short-term outcomes related to the senior volunteers are the primary focus for this evaluation. Future evaluations may be able to gather the perspectives of food depot clients, and determine to what extent the program has increased their awareness, knowledge and/or skills in preparing nutritious meals (see Program Theory, Appendix A for the short-term and long-term outcomes related to food depot clients).

Through the process of developing the program theory, the following program components were identified:

- **Healthy Meal Preparation & Skill Development** - Activities to engage Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers in demonstrating nutritious and tasty meals to food depot clients at neighbourhood food depots
- **Supports and Resources** - Activities to support a team of Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers in selecting handout materials, recipes, and making positive connections with food depot clients
- **Civic Participation & Skill Development** - Activities to engage Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers in neighbourhood resource groups as skilled volunteers, and provide opportunities for seniors to contribute their skills and wisdom in their community
- **Community Capacity Building** - Activities to develop leadership skills, program planning and implementation skills, and community engagement skills among Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers in order to influence their ability to recognize and respond to community needs and opportunities.

The short-term outcomes of the program for the Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers are as follows:

- Enhanced leadership skills among Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers
- Reduced risk of isolation for Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers
- Increased Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers' awareness level of social issues within their community
- Increased sense of empowerment among Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers
- Established peer support and networking among Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers.

Through the process of facilitating the program activities and achievement of the short-term outcomes, it is the aim of the program to achieve the following long-term outcomes:

- Strengthened existing neighbourhood resource groups by increased interactions with Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers
- Strengthened social development of neighbourhoods through Healthy Tidbit senior volunteer engagement.

The long-term impact that the program aims to achieve is to improve the quality of life for the senior volunteers involved in the program.

Evaluation Design and Methods

An evaluation plan was developed by the MLHU Program Evaluator in consultation with the Executive Director of the LCRC and the MLHU Public Health Dietitian. The Executive Director coordinated and administered the program from its conception. The MLHU Public Health Dietitian has been involved as a consultant to the program since the beginning of the initiative.

Purposes of the Evaluation

An evaluation was developed in order to capture the lessons learned and the impact of the pilot program. The reporting requirements from the funding agency, New Horizons for Seniors Program, shaped the purpose of the evaluation and the main evaluation questions. The following evaluation purposes were established:

- To gather the experiences of the volunteers and the program coordinator who were involved in planning and running the program.
- To identify the challenges encountered by the volunteers and the program coordinator and to identify possible areas for improvement.
- To identify changes that may have occurred in the lives of volunteers as a result of their participation in the program.

As aforementioned, a program theory was developed to assist in identify specific evaluation questions, and appears in Appendix A.

Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were developed from the purpose statements and the program theory:

1. What activities have volunteers been involved in throughout the program?
2. What are the challenges associated with the program?
3. What feedback about the program has been gathered from participants and program partners?
4. What improvements can be made to the program?
5. What impact has the program had on senior volunteers?

Methodology

An evaluation plan was developed which included the following methods:

- Tracking of data related to activities and participation as collected by senior volunteers and the program coordinator
- Focus group conducted with volunteers to gather their experiences of being involved in the program and lessons learned in the beginning stages of the initiative
- In-depth interview with the program coordinator

Data collection methods and analysis procedures are described in the following section.

Tracking Activities and Participation Data

The Program Coordinator and senior volunteers were asked to track data related to their participation and activities that occurred throughout the program. The following indicators of activities and participation were recorded, and the results are summarized in the Findings section:

- Number of volunteers involved in the program
- Number of volunteers who are seniors
- Number of non-senior volunteers
- Number of meetings held by/with seniors to coordinate and develop the program
- Number of taste test booths delivered over the course of the program
- Number of additional community events developed and delivered.

At the beginning of the program, the following indicators were identified and were to be collected by the senior volunteers during the running of the taste test booths:

- Number of food depot contacts made at each of the two locations
- Number of samples given out at each of the locations
- Number of recipes given out at each of the locations

However, tracking of these indicators did not occur, because the main focus of operating the taste test booths was to ensure the comfort level of the senior volunteers. Tracking of the indicators could be incorporated and monitored in the future.

Focus Group with Volunteers

A focus group was conducted at the end of February 2008, approximately six months after the initial involvement of volunteers, and four months after the initial taste test booth was established. The purpose of the focus group was to gather the experiences of the volunteers involved in the planning and running the program, to identify challenges that may have been encountered in running the program, and to note possible areas for improvement. An additional purpose of the focus group was to identify changes that may have occurred in the senior volunteers' lives as a result of participating in the program. A focus group guide was developed based on the evaluation questions and short-term outcomes listed in the program theory. The focus group guide (see Appendix B) was developed by the MLHU Program Evaluator in consultation with the Executive Director of LCRC and the MLHU Public Health Dietitian. The focus group was moderated by the Public Health Dietitian and co-moderated by the Program Evaluator.

A total of 10 volunteers who were involved in the program at the six-month time period were invited to participate in the focus group, including eight senior volunteers and two students. A total of six volunteers participated in the focus group: four senior volunteers, and two students. The students included a community development student from Brescia University College, and a nutrition student from Brescia University College. All participants completed an informed consent form before the focus group began (see Appendix C). The focus group was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by an outside professional transcriber.

An alternative method was developed to gather the experiences from one senior volunteer who was unable to attend the focus group. A questionnaire form was developed which included the identical questions that were asked during the focus group. An information letter and the questionnaire form (see Appendix D) were emailed to the senior volunteer. The information letter identified that the individual's responses would be integrated with the responses from the focus group in order to ensure anonymity for this participant. As a result, this participant is referred to as a "focus group participant" within the findings section of the report.

The focus group transcript and the questionnaire form were analyzed for key themes by the focus group moderator and co-moderator. Results of the

content analysis were examined for evidence related to the evaluation questions.

In-depth Interview with Program Coordinator

A semi-structured, in-depth interview was conducted by the MLHU Program Evaluator with the Program Coordinator at the beginning of March 2008. The purpose of the interview was to gather the experiences of the Program Coordinator who had been involved in planning and overseeing the program, to discuss the challenges encountered in the program, and identify possible areas for improvement. The purpose of the interview also included gathering the Program Coordinator's perspective on changes that may have occurred in the senior volunteers' lives as a result of participation in the program. The interview guide (see Appendix E) was based on the evaluation questions and short-term outcomes listed in the program theory. The Program Coordinator completed a consent form before the interview began (see Appendix F). The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber. The transcript was analyzed for key themes by the MLHU Program Evaluator, and the MLHU Public Health Dietitian.

Findings

Tracking Activities and Participation

The Program Coordinator and senior volunteers tracked data related to their participation and activities that took place during the program. Table 1 provides a summary of this tracking information.

After becoming actively involved in the Healthy Tidbits Program, a few senior volunteers became interested in developing another community event. They partnered with the London InterCommunity Health Centre (Huron and Highbury location) to develop and deliver a workshop demonstrating the preparation of a Christmas Dinner. This included the preparation and cooking of turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, vegetables, gravy and apple crisp. All the recipes used fresh ingredients, rather than pre-packaged or canned items. The workshop was followed by a sit-down dinner in which the prepared food was served. Recipes for the dinner were distributed. A subsequent community dinner for Easter time was developed, but the London InterCommunity Health Centre was not able to participate due to a change in their plans. As a result, the community dinner for Easter time was not held.

The Process of Recruitment

Developing a Successful Recruitment Strategy in the Beginning

When the funding for the program was obtained, a Program Coordinator was hired to take on the role of planning and developing the program, which included one of the initial tasks of recruiting the senior volunteers. However, due to some unforeseen challenges, the Program Coordinator experienced some difficulties gaining the interest of senior volunteers. Several months into the program, the Program Coordinator left the agency for another position, and the Executive Director of the LCRC (herein referred to as the Program Coordinator) assumed the Program Coordinator role.

Some of the initial recruitment efforts that were initiated were surprisingly not successful at recruiting any volunteers. These strategies included articles in various church papers, and flyers distributed through various local networks. More creative efforts were required to engage members of the senior population. Two newspaper articles were successful at drawing the attention of all of the senior volunteers who

Table 1: Tracking Activities and Participation

Indicators	Number of Participants and Number of Activities
Total number of volunteers involved in the program	14 volunteers
Number of volunteers who are seniors, including five of the eleven senior volunteers involved in leading and organizing the program	12 senior volunteers
Number of non-senior volunteers, including: - one University-level nutrition student - one Community Food Advisor student	2 students
Number of meetings held by/with seniors to coordinate and develop program	12 meetings
Number of food depot sites where partnerships were established to offer taste test booths	2 food depot sites
Number of taste test booths delivered over the course of the program	8 taste test booths

initially came forward to participate. One article was placed in *The Londoner*, and in the “*Every Bite Counts*” column in the *London Free Press*. These strategies worked very well at gaining the interest of the senior volunteers and also informing the general community about the program. As recalled by the Program Coordinator:

Not only did it—what I loved about having those articles is not only was it able to recruit, but it drew attention to the rest of the community, that efforts are being made. It drew like a positive spin on a problem...it gave a positive feeling to the community, that people care...are trying to address issues in a positive way. So I loved that. ...And that they [seniors] do have a lot of valuable skills to offer the community.

Establishing Expectations for Volunteer Involvement

The Program Coordinator established the program so the senior volunteers would be active participants in the planning and development of all aspects of the program. This process was seen as very important by the Program Coordinator in order to encourage ownership of the program. However, this created challenges for some senior volunteers who were initially recruited. Some of the initial senior volunteers were not interested in being involved in the planning phase, but were excited about the actual delivery of the program. The Program Coordinator described this challenge in the following passage:

So from the beginning what we did, I tried to have them understand that they were going to be—it was their project. So they needed to have ownership of it from the very beginning. So some of the people that we recruited and came to our first meetings were thinking that they were walking into an already-established program. So they have just kind of stepped aside until we work out some of these things.

- Program Coordinator

Some of the senior volunteers who did not want to be involved in the planning and development were provided with the option of returning to the program in later stages when there is a need for additional volunteers to assist with the delivery of the taste test booths. In the opinion of one of the focus group participants, a few senior volunteers dropped out early on in the program probably for a variety of reasons. However, the result was a “core group” of volunteers who had a strong commitment to the program.

A Need for More Recruits

Focus group participants indicated that there is a need to recruit more senior volunteers to the program before additional sites are established. They explained that two volunteers are sufficient for running a taste test booth. However, there is a need to have volunteers available to fill-in if someone is ill, has another commitment, or is away for an extended period.

It was echoed by the Program Coordinator that it is time to recruit more senior volunteers to the program. In order to be able to offer additional taste test booths at other local food depots, it is necessary to recruit more volunteers. At the time that the evaluation was conducted there were two taste test booths operating, with plans of initiating a third at another site. However, it was decided that until additional senior volunteers were recruited, the third taste test booth would be put on hold.

Considerations for Recruitment when working with the Senior Population

The Program Coordinator described some of the considerations to keep in mind when working with senior populations. Some seniors have many other commitments and interests in their retirement years that need to be taken into consideration when planning for this program. For example, some seniors have other volunteer commitments and some also travel. All of these considerations need to be kept in mind when establishing the expectations for volunteer commitments for the program, in order to ensure that senior volunteers feel that they can maintain a balance between their family, social and volunteer commitments. Another consideration when working with the senior population is the winter weather that impacts walking and driving.

Planning and Development

Setting the Stage for Success

Once the senior volunteers were recruited, the first few months of the program involved several meetings for planning and development of the taste test booths. During these meetings, the senior volunteers had opportunities to get to know one another, understand the clients’ needs, and discuss what their roles would be in running the taste test booths. One focus group participant recalled what the early planning meetings involved:

We were concerned about who the clients were going to be, that we wanted to have an understanding of that. We wanted to understand exactly how we would go about this, and of course we were all new to each other so we needed a sense of how each of us worked and I guess what expertise we brought to the table... We also had to think about the types of food that we could prepare that would be simple enough and what the environment would be that we would actually be doing this in.

- Senior Volunteer

During the initial planning stage of program, it was established that the taste test booths would utilize healthy recipes that were affordable to make and included foods available in the food hampers. Two resources that were noted as being useful for the selection of recipes included the Basic Shelf Cookbook (City of York Health Unit, 2004), and the Nutrition Fact Sheets distributed by MLHU.

An example of one of the initial tasks that the Program Coordinator engaged the senior volunteers in completing was setting up a volunteer description for recruitment purposes. This was an example of a task that encouraged the senior volunteers to take on a leadership role for the program, as described by the Program Coordinator in the following excerpt:

Yes. Now, it would take some time before they got comfortable enough to be able to be doing that. So my role would continue to be working with them, but more as a guidance, helping them through that and then just handing off more and more responsibility as the group gets stronger.

- Program Coordinator

The senior volunteers were provided with many opportunities in the beginning planning stages to learn about effective strategies to run taste test booths. In order to prepare the senior volunteers for their roles in operating the taste test booths, the Program Coordinator indicated that a mock demonstration of a taste test booth was initiated. This involved two senior volunteers preparing a minestrone soup recipe for the rest of the senior volunteer group. The Program Coordinator described this activity as "...a little training session" that provided them with the opportunity to offer feedback and suggestions on how the mock demonstration could be improved for the actual taste test booths.

In order for the senior volunteers to find out more information about the food depots, the Program Coordinator arranged a visit to the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Food Depot. This food depot was selected because it was one of the sites where the

senior volunteers would be operating the taste test booths. This visit was described as a successful approach to provide the senior volunteers with a greater understanding about the operation of a food depot and issues of food insecurity experienced by members of the community. The Program Coordinator recalled this experience in the following passage:

I think the first — one of the first things that we did in probably our second or third meeting was to actually go to a food depot. So we went as a group and we met there before the depot opened. So it was before the actual—people started to come in and pick up their food hampers, so they could get a handle on what that was all about. So we went to the site and we saw the trucks coming in and the food being set up in the depot. And I think it really was an eye-opener for them. And then we went in and we took a look at the different food hampers so that they could have an understanding of the type of food that was being received, because you know, I don't think they really had that clear picture of what people got. And [what] they need.

- Program Coordinator

Several senior volunteers also echoed this observation that the visit to the neighbourhood food depot was a worthwhile experience to have at the beginning planning stages. This learning was instrumental in having the volunteers have a better understanding of the issues of poverty and food insecurity. This is well illustrated by the following comment:

Another thing which we did which I found a new experience for me was I had no knowledge of the food banks or the food depot. And having an opportunity to visit a food depot that was really very well used and had expanded beyond a food depot, I just found eye-opening and it's revealed a whole, another part of the community to me that I didn't know first-hand.

- Senior Volunteers

The Program Coordinator and Student Roles

The efforts of the Program Coordinator have been instrumental throughout the planning and development of the program. As noted by many focus group participants, the Program Coordinator has provided ongoing leadership, guidance, encouragement and support. She has promoted a spirit of co-operation and teamwork. As described by one of the focus group participants, the Program Coordinator has the ability to determine "what each person's skill levels are and what they're most interested in, in tapping into that." The Program Coordinator has encouraged the

senior volunteers to follow their interests and become involved in other community programs. As one participant commented, “her hard work and dedication have made it a success”.

The involvement of the nutrition student and the community development student in the program was also described as being very helpful from the perspective of the senior volunteers. Both students have been able to provide advice and guidance related to such areas as nutrition, and community planning. The community development student has also played a role assisting with the running of one of the taste test booths.

Challenges Encountered in the Planning Stage

The initial planning phase of the program required several months. Some participants recollected that the beginning of the program was slow to get underway, but they also noted that this phase was important in order to develop a successful program. One participant explained that starting a new program can be challenging, but “once the actual program got underway, things progressed quickly.” This phase involved significant planning and preparation. Focus group participants described that they were being “very cautious”, “consistent”, and used a “very studied approach” in order to make sure that they were well prepared. Participants echoed this observation in the following conversation:

Participant A: I think in the beginning we started out very slow because we wanted to be cautious. There were a few other volunteers and I think they got frustrated and left in the beginning stages because we weren't moving fast enough. But I think there was a number of us who felt we need to make sure we had our ducks in order before we went there because we didn't want to fail.

Participant B: It took quite a bit more time than what we anticipated and it didn't feel we were making much progress, but I think it was worthwhile in the end.

Participant A: ...we wanted to be consistent in our approach to the food depots because we felt these people had been let down a lot in their lives and we didn't want to go in and start something and not be able to be consistent.

- Focus Group Participants

One focus group participant offered some observations about the beginning planning stages, including that the different backgrounds of the volunteers may have created some challenges that

increased the amount of time the program took to get underway. A second observation was that the first few meetings of the group did not provide opportunities for everyone to openly express their opinions because some individuals in the group were more vocal than others during the discussion. At the same time, the focus group participant indicated that it was evident that “these people have given their all to this program” and their dedication and passion toward the program is admired. Possible recommendations related to establishing ground rules for volunteer meetings may facilitate any challenges with individual members monopolizing group discussions (see Recommendations).

One of the main challenges of the program as noted by the Program Coordinator was the ambitious program plan in light of the one-year timeframe. The anticipated number of people engaged in the program and the number of taste test booths as outlined in the grant proposal are greater than what was feasible to accomplish within the timeframe for the program. However, as the Program Coordinator explained in the following excerpt, the program made a significant start in the first year by engaging a core group of senior volunteers who are enthusiastic about building on the initiative:

You definitely can see the enthusiasm and the way that these volunteers definitely are — have taken ownership, and do want to see it moved forward, and are interested in all of these — outcomes. But it's not going to happen in the time frame that we were in, in the wintertime.

- Program Coordinator

An additional challenge in the planning stage involved the establishment of the food depot site locations. There were a couple of sites that were initially investigated, but they were not suitable because they did not have a kitchen facility or a facility that was suitable for preparing food. These infrastructure issues were addressed by only selecting the food depot sites that had appropriate kitchen facilities.

During the planning stage, it was necessary for the senior volunteers to be certified through the Safe Food Handling course offered by MLHU. A partnership was formed with the Intercommunity Health Centre to share the costs of offering the course to the Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers and some of the Intercommunity Health Centre's volunteers. Several focus group participants indicated that the length of the Safe Food Handling course was too long, and that much of the content was not relevant to the type of food handling

involved in running the taste test booths. It was suggested that an abbreviated and adapted version of this course should be developed for training volunteers in such a program as the Healthy Tidbits Program.

In the planning stage, a Terms of Reference document was drafted for the program. It was recommended that the Terms of Reference for the program be finalized. As one of the focus group participants stated, "...I think something like that sometimes helps you to refocus...and make sure that you're still going in the directions that you intended to go in."

Running the Food Demonstration and Taste Test Booths

Developing Innovative Strategies to Address the Challenges

There were several challenges in running the taste test booths as noted by focus group participants. The senior volunteers were actively involved in developing creative solutions to address some of these challenges. One challenge related to the language barriers between senior volunteers and the food depot clients. Many clients are new to Canada, and may be learning English as a second language. For some clients, literacy may also be an issue. To address some of the language barriers and literacy related challenges, a unique strategy was implemented for the recipes that are distributed to clients. Symbols and images of ingredients and measuring amounts have been incorporated into the recipe sheets in order to promote understanding.

The Program Coordinator described that the senior volunteers have been able to utilize their creativity and resourcefulness in running the taste test booths in response to some of the anticipated language, literacy and cultural barriers that food depot clients experience. One example of this was the bristol board display that was developed by the senior volunteers to illustrate the ingredients and the costs that were involved in making the particular recipe that they had made for the taste test booth. This innovative approach was captured in the following passage, and has been noted as a useful strategy that the senior volunteers will try to incorporate for other taste test booths:

So now I went in there one time and a couple of them had made up this wonderful sign to show what the ingredients were, what the cost was and all of it, so it gave them a breakdown of cost per serving. But they didn't just take and write it

out, 'Beans, \$1.25', you know? They actually took the label off of the can of beans so that if somebody wasn't able to read, they actually saw the picture of the label, and then they had the label on the bristol board and they had it up in front of the display... And it's something that the participants themselves can see and they can visualize—even if they don't necessarily understand English...

- Program Coordinator

Another challenge in running the taste test booths involved engaging the food depot clients. The clients' primary reason for being there is to pick up their parcels. As one participant stated, "They're not necessarily there to socialize". Each food depot serves a unique clientele: primarily single men at one food depot site (Kinsmen site), and many families new to Canada at the other site (St. Lawrence site). These distinct clienteles require different strategies for engagement, and they also have different needs. As a result, the senior volunteers have had to generate some creative and innovation strategies to connect with the clientele and to build rapport. At one site, they placed the samples of the ingredients on a display table for clientele to observe. They also developed an approach to provide small packages of spices and herbs that are required for certain recipes. The results of these approaches are captured in the following excerpts:

Participant A: So what we did the last time with demonstrating, we put samples of the ingredients out on the table and some of them actually lifted up the empty cans and then they got the spices and everything and it worked, you know.

Participant B: And we tried to give out little samples, little packages of spices and herbs. And [senior volunteer] has sort of pioneered this approach of putting out a visual demonstration of what it costs to make this recipe and, you know, how many people it would serve. So we're kind of gradually adding to our little bag of tricks.

- Focus Group Participants

At the site serving primarily single men, a different strategy was developed to try to engage the clientele. As one focus group participant described, "It's been basically a one-on-one approach" with the main goal of establishing some rapport with the clientele. Another focus group participant stated that a strategy that has been effective at engaging some of the clientele involves letting the clientele know that the recipe is something that they can make with the food that they might have in their package.

Partnering with the neighbourhood food depots has been a positive experience for the Healthy Tidbits

Program. Overall, the focus group participants highlighted that the staff and volunteers at the neighbourhood food depots have been very accommodating. A couple of focus group participants explained lessons that they learned in using the facilities and kitchen supplies at the food depots. Because the food depots are shared and used by many other community programs, the senior volunteers realized after some feedback from other staff at the food depot that they needed to make sure they returned supplies to the same place that they were located in the kitchen.

Suggestions for Improving the Taste Test Booths

During the regular meetings for the program, the Program Coordinator and volunteers discussed ways to improve the delivery of the taste test booths. Some of the suggestions for improvement that have been generated from discussions included the development of a poster or banner that identifies the Healthy Tidbit program. A poster or banner would create an identity for the program and provide some visual appeal. Another strategy that was discussed included informing food depot clients during the taste test booth about the recipe that will be featured during the next taste test booth. Such a strategy may create more interest for food depot clients to return the following month. However, it was noted by the Program Coordinator that the challenge in promoting the recipe for the next month may be misinterpreted by some as a meal, rather than a taste test.

After checking the contents of the food hampers, senior volunteers identified ways that they could provide information about how to prepare some types of foods that may be unfamiliar to some of the food depot clients. For example, the food hampers include bags of rice and beans, but there are no directions on how to prepare them. It was suggested that an instruction sheet could be included in the food hampers, and as a result, this approach is being investigated. Furthermore, it was recommended that the senior volunteers should find out from the clientele the types of foods that they receive in their food hampers that they do not know how to cook. This discussion created much enthusiasm during the focus group. The result of this approach is captured in the following excerpt:

Or find some recipes and give it to them and say this is what you do. You know? And for example, those kinds of things that could be demonstrated to them at the food bank. The next time they come and they say, 'You all have beans left, so is here

[is] one of a thousand dishes that you can do with beans.

- Senior Volunteer

It was also suggested that if clientele do not have the proper kitchen utensils to prepare food, the Healthy Tidbits Program could make some utensils available to them. The utensils could be purchased at a second hand store.

An observation made by at least two focus group participants revealed that one of the neighbourhood food depots, the Kinsmen site, could be improved with the rearrangement of the room. They described that the Kinsmen site has chairs arranged around the perimeter of the room, which may not be the best arrangement to encourage people to socialize. They suggested that having small tables and chairs throughout the room may promote conversation. The focus group participants discussed the possibility of approaching the Kinsmen site staff and volunteers to share their ideas.

It was recommended by the focus group participants that one representative of their group should attend the neighbourhood food depot meeting on a regular basis in order to provide communication to and from the Healthy Tidbits group. It was suggested that the Healthy Tidbits group could discuss issues and feedback that they would like the representative to share at the neighbourhood food depot meetings.

Several focus group participants discussed other possibilities that they may develop to better meet the needs of some of the food depot clients. As an example, they are investigating the possibility of offering cooking classes at one of the food depots.

Impacts on Volunteers

Many participants indicated the Healthy Tidbits Program was an excellent opportunity in which they could get involved. One participant indicated, "I'm used to being active and being involved, and this was the perfect opportunity." Involvement in the Healthy Tidbits Program offered participants the opportunity to contribute to their community in a different way. One participant stated about their volunteer experience with the Healthy Tidbits Program,

(w)hen I get home I'm...tired but I feel rejuvenated, I call it. I'm physically tired but I have done something beneficial...I don't know about the rest of you, but it makes me feel good.

- Senior Volunteer

In addition to the physical exhaustion and sense of accomplishment participants shared, they indicated they feel “motivated” to contribute to other programs and services offered in the community. This increased awareness of community programs and services provides the opportunity for the volunteers to “keep you current and keep you on your toes as far as knowing what’s going on in your community and becoming involved and feeling like you’re helping in some small way.”

Perhaps the impact this program has on the participants is best summarized by one participant who reflected on her involvement in this way:

You know, I defined myself for forty years as a teacher and then suddenly that wasn't there anymore. You know? You say to yourself 'well, who am I? I'm a Mom. I'm a wife. I'm a good cook...' But that's sort of the limit. And so when you get involved in something like this, it helps you to say: 'My skills are still valuable. They're still valid. I still have, you know, something to contribute to my community.

- Senior Volunteer

The relevance the Healthy Tidbits Program has offered this particular volunteer as well as others who acknowledged this statement during the focus group demonstrates clearly how this program has had a positive impact on the senior volunteers.

“Spin Off” Opportunities Available to Healthy Tidbits Volunteers

Many of the Healthy Tidbit volunteers indicated they had received opportunities for other programs or volunteer activities as a result of their involvement in Healthy Tidbits. Some of these activities included food demonstrations related to safe food handling and proper turkey preparation (offered prior to Thanksgiving to community groups at the London InterCommunity Health Centre), participation in collective kitchens (offered throughout the city of London and facilitated by the LCRC), and participation in a pilot cooking program for young, vulnerable mothers (offered by the South London Community Resource Centre and facilitated through London Community Resource Centre).

One volunteer has a garden plot (through the Community Gardens Project facilitated by London Community Resource Centre) and plans to utilize part of this plot to grow herbs and vegetables for summer recipes that can be incorporated into the Healthy Tidbits Program over the summer months.

Involvement in other community programs and services can be summarized by one participant who said, “...if I hadn’t come here I probably would never have been able to do that either” and another one who indicated, “...I think this experience has been a springboard for a lot of us to kind of get involved in other things.”

While the Healthy Tidbits Program has led to other community volunteer opportunities for many senior volunteers, one volunteer in this program indicated that her traveling limits her involvement in additional volunteer activities; however, she “will probably limit (her) volunteering to this worthy program at this time.” Overall, participants indicated their interest in expanding the Healthy Tidbits Program to “meet other needs in the community.”

Impacts on Food Depot Clients

Many participants indicated that it is difficult to know whether their participation in the Healthy Tidbits Program is considered effective from the viewpoint of the food depot clients. One participant indicated, “...and lots of time you never do know how people are responding or what impact it has on them.” The challenge with engaging clients seems to dissipate over time when rapport and trust are developed with the food depot clients. This sentiment was succinctly summarized by one participant who said,

...community development takes a lot of time, right? ...we have to foster those relationships and sometimes it's easier than other times and so we just sort of chip away, chip away.

- Senior Volunteer

On the other hand, the Healthy Tidbits volunteers have made great strides in establishing connections with the food depot clients and have begun building rapport with some of the clients attending monthly. One participant indicated “when they see us, they smile,” which this participant interpreted as positive recognition and acceptance of the senior volunteers in the food depots. Another participant indicated, “...they are getting comfortable with us to ask us questions.”

Two participants were involved in a collective kitchen program with young mothers. These participants indicated their involvement in this program served to “empower” the young women. At first, these participants didn’t “hold a lot of hope for changing their (the young mothers’) lives” but after their involvement in the program for a few weeks, the participants “hear(d) one of them saying, ‘We could do this. We could totally do this.

This isn't so hard.' So even if they didn't actually think they did it, they took home the recipes and they had some sense that maybe we had empowered (them) a little bit to try some new things." It was clear that the participants needed to know whether or not their involvement with Healthy Tidbits or other spin-off programs were having some sort of positive effect on the clientele involved in these programs.

Responses from the Community – Participants and Program Partners

Community partnerships have been developed and fostered as a result of the Healthy Tidbits Program. The LCRC, the MLHU, and the Healthy Living Partnership of Middlesex-London have maintained strong collaborative partnerships for several years and continue to work together offering various programs and services to the community. Relationships have also been established and enhanced with the London InterCommunity Health Centre and South London Community Resource Centre. Additionally, each food depot is coordinated by different social service agencies/organizations in the city of London and has been instrumental in the progression of the Healthy Tidbits Program in their particular depot. Without approval from these social service agencies/organizations, the Healthy Tidbits Program would be stalled or possibly discontinued.

There has been only positive feedback from the community partners working with the Healthy Tidbits senior volunteers. The community partners have commented that the involvement of the Healthy Tidbit volunteers facilitated a more inviting environment in the food depot. In fact, the community partners have commented the Healthy Tidbits volunteers have been able to engage the clients effectively by establishing rapport through the provision of education, food, and support. One participant sums up the positive response from the community by stating, "(t)he minister at our place (food depot)...he's tickled pink, you know. He said that at the time when we are there, they usually have more people come!" While it may not be clear the positive effects of the Healthy Tidbits Program on food depot clients, it is clear that the optimistic environment provided by the Healthy Tidbits volunteers is shared with the program partners. Further evaluation of the effects of this program on community participants is warranted.

Discussion

The participants of the focus group and interview were very forthcoming with their feedback about the program. The discussion during the focus group and interview included topics such as: activities as volunteers; impressions of the program; challenges of the program; suggestions for improving the program; feedback from partners and participants regarding the program; and, impacts on the volunteers.

Through these discussions with senior volunteer participants, it was discovered the Healthy Tidbits Program has met all program components as described in the program theory (see Appendix A), and is making progress towards the key short-term outcomes highlighted by New Horizons for Seniors funding. Senior volunteers agreed to participate in this volunteer opportunity primarily because of their awareness and knowledge about preparing nutritious meals and personal need to connect with their communities in different ways. Through their direct involvement in the Healthy Tidbits Program, these volunteers have demonstrated strong leadership capacity during the program planning and development phases as well as while implementing the program at the various food depot sites.

Nearly all Healthy Tidbit volunteers indicated their involvement in the program has increased their awareness and appreciation of the issue of poverty and food insecurity in the city of London. This increased awareness of social issues within their community has served to enhance their compassion for the program and the recipients of food bank hampers, all the while thinking of creative ways in which they can assist London's vulnerable community in different ways. Many have already explored additional volunteer opportunities and continue to express interest in expanding their roles as community volunteers working with this particular population group.

Along with the heightened awareness of the vulnerable community and social programs available for this population, the senior volunteers of the Healthy Tidbits Program also have experienced an appreciation of their role in improving the quality of life among food depot clients. The senior volunteers expressed having a feeling of empowerment among themselves and a sense of purpose and value in and for their community. Without the Healthy Tidbit program, some of the senior volunteers may not have

experienced a sense of feeling valued by their community.

As stated earlier, the New Horizons Funding for Seniors main objectives were (1) to encourage seniors to contribute their expert knowledge, skills, and wisdom in support of social well-being in their community and (2) to engage the seniors themselves in community activities to reduce their potential for social isolation. There is evidence from this evaluation that the first objective has been met. Related to the second objective, there is also evidence that the seniors have been actively involved in the operating this community-based program. Yet, it can not be determined to what extent involvement of the senior volunteers in the program has reduced the risk of social isolation. Future evaluations could examine the extent to which this objective has been met. It is anticipated that with further involvement of the seniors in the Healthy Tidbits Program, the long-term outcomes for the program, strengthened existing neighbourhood resource groups and social development of neighbourhoods through the engagement and interactions with the senior volunteers, will be facilitated. Overall, many senior participants in this program have intimated their quality of life has improved through their involvement with the Healthy Tidbits Program. This overall impact is a true measure of success of the initiative.

Study Limitations

The main study limitation related to restricted timeframe for conducting the evaluation. As a result, a small-scale evaluation was developed (i.e. 7 weeks to develop and conduct the evaluation from start to completion). Due to the time restrictions, it was not possible to conduct a literature review for the evaluation. In future evaluations of this program, a thorough literature review of related programs would provide additional context for framing the evaluation and understanding the findings.

Originally, the evaluators considered completing in-depth interviews with participants rather than a focus group. However, due to limited financial resources and time, the evaluators decided to conduct the focus group instead. It is assumed that in-depth interviews may have elicited more comprehensive context of their experiences in the program and would have ensured greater confidentiality in a one-on-one setting.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for ongoing program development have been generated from focus group and interview feedback for consideration by the staff and volunteers involved in the Healthy Tidbit program:

Recruitment and Retention:

1. Develop a recruitment strategy for engaging new senior volunteers.
2. Indicate to recruited volunteers that program planning may take longer than anticipated but working with a vulnerable community requires development of trust and rapport building to ensure success.
3. Continue with volunteer recruitment to ensure ongoing success and to meet community needs.
4. Explore different ways in which seniors can be recruited for participation in the Healthy Tidbits Program.
5. Provide opportunities for volunteers to learn about the process of community development.
6. Continue to encourage feedback from senior volunteers and involve seniors in opportunities to express their concerns in a formalized way (e.g. participation at the food depot network group) in an effort to demonstrate how their participation is valued and viewed as an asset to the operation of the food depots overall.

Promotion:

7. Explore different ways in which the Healthy Tidbits Program can be promoted in the community (marketing opportunities etc.).
8. Create different ways in which food demonstrations can incorporate education opportunities for food depot clients (e.g. food label reading, costing of recipes, etc.).
9. Explore ways in which food demonstrations can be more creative and engaging of clientele.
10. Consider developing a poster or banner for the taste test booths in order to create an identity for the program and provide some visual appeal.
11. Explore the development of a strategy to inform food depot clients of up and coming recipes for the taste test booths.
12. Explore the option of offering cooking classes to food depot clients.

13. Investigate an approach to determine types of food hamper products that are not being utilized by food depot clients, and subsequently develop recipes that incorporate these products for the taste test booths.

Infrastructure:

14. Ensure proper infrastructure is available to operate effective cooking demonstrations and taste test booths.
15. Work with food depots to improve infrastructure issues experienced by Healthy Tidbits senior volunteers.

Administration of Healthy Tidbits:

16. Contact MLHU staff offering the food handler training program to determine whether an abbreviated and adapted version of the course could be developed for training volunteers in such programs as the Healthy Tidbit program.
17. Adapt or modify the food handler training program to satisfy the basic food handler training requirements while accurately reflecting the possible issues arising in a community-based kitchen.
18. Establish ground rules within volunteer groups to ensure equal contribution to program development by all volunteers, based on their comfort level, skill contribution, and interest in participating.
19. Finalize the Terms of Reference for the program in order to provide a description of the overall purpose and structure of the program.
20. Establish one representative of the Healthy Tidbit group to attend the neighbourhood food depot meetings.
21. Consider sharing feedback with neighbourhood food depot staff/volunteers about the room arrangement of the Kinsmen site.

Future Program Development and Evaluation:

22. Explore the impact of the Healthy Tidbits Program on the food bank recipients through future evaluation studies.

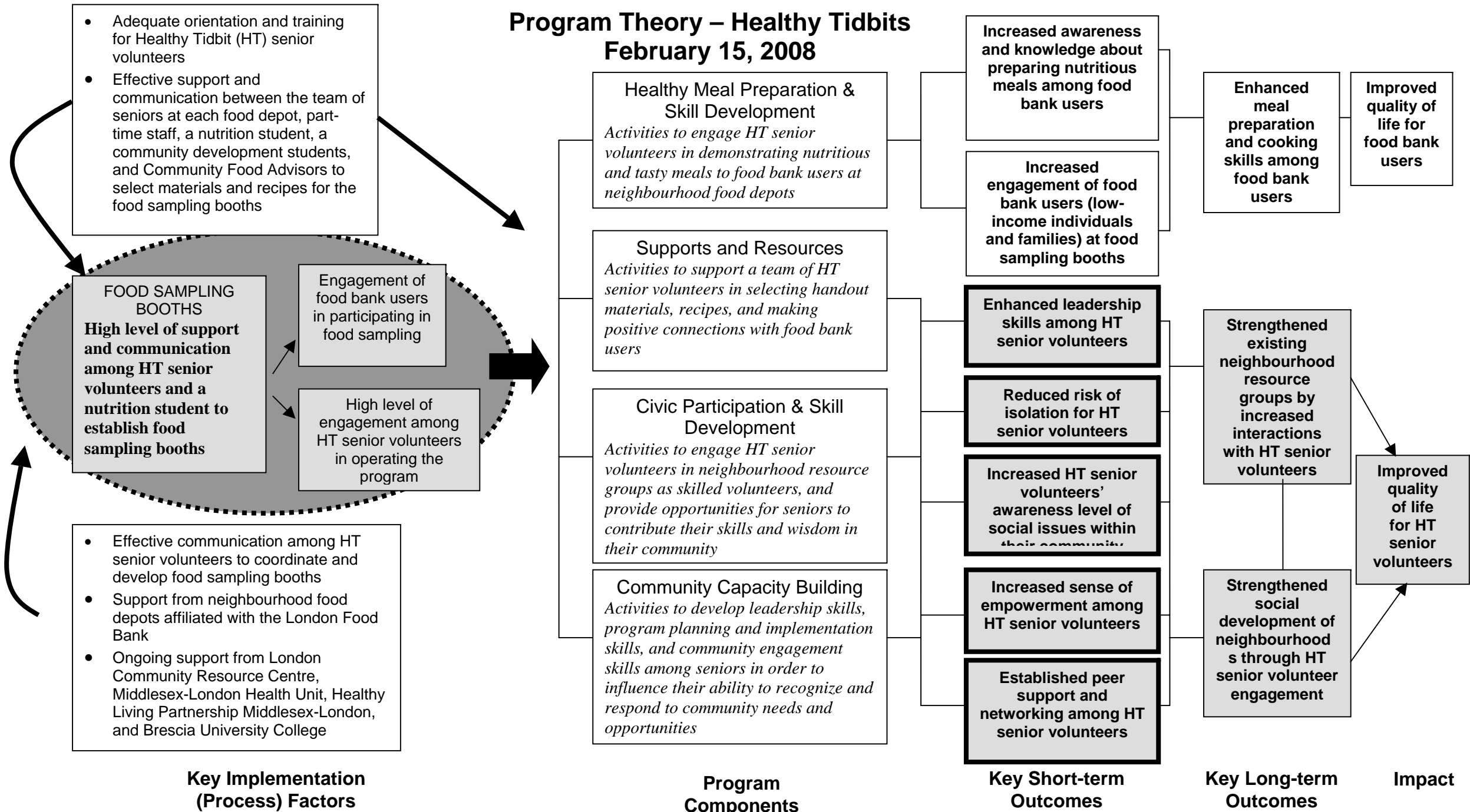
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Appendix A - Program Theory – Healthy Tidbits

Program Theory – Healthy Tidbits February 15, 2008



Appendix B - Healthy Tidbits Evaluation Focus Group Guide

A. Purpose of the Focus Group Session: Friday, February 29th 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Thanks for agreeing to have us attend your group meeting today. My name is Heather Thomas, and I'm a Dietitian with Middlesex-London Health Unit... and I'm going to be facilitating our session today. Melissa McCann, a Program Evaluator with Middlesex-London Health Unit will be taking notes as our discussion takes place. As you may know, we are receiving a bit of funding for the Healthy Tidbits program and as part of the process, we are obligated to provide an evaluation of the program to our funders. While this evaluation is a requirement of the funding, we are interested in hearing your experiences and stories of being involved in the program, and discussing ways in which the program can be improved.

B. Review Informed Consent and Tape Recording Process

We have an information letter and consent form for you to review and sign (hand out forms). We were hoping that we would be able to tape-record the session today in order to provide an accurate record of all of the ideas and opinions expressed.

The tape will be transcribed by an outside professional transcriptionist. Transcripts from our session will be analyzed by myself and Melissa McCann. No other individuals will have access to the tape recording. Your names or identifying information will not be included in any report for this evaluation. A report of the findings from the evaluation will be available to you when it is completed.

Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. If you would like, we can turn off the recorder at any time. You will be free to decline to respond to any question, and may leave the focus group at any time without explanation.

Is it OK with you if we tape-record our session today? [obtain verbal agreement]

Please take a few minutes to read over the consent form.

Does anyone have any questions?

Collect forms.

C. Questions

Opening Questions (ice breaker questions):

Tell us your name, what location have you been volunteering at with the Healthy Tidbits taste test booth, and one thing that interested you in becoming involved in the program...

Activities as a Volunteer

1. Think about what you've been doing as a volunteer. What types of activities have you been involved in from the beginning of the program until now?
 - Probe: How would you describe your participation in the planning and development of this program? What specific areas of development have you been involved in? Tell me about your experience.

Impressions of the Program

2. What are your overall impressions of the Healthy Tidbits Program?
 - Probe: What do you like about it? Why?
 - Probe: What do you not like about it? Why?

Challenges in the Program

3. What challenges have you faced in the startup of taste test booths at the different food depots?
4. Have these challenges been resolved? If so, how? If not, do you have any suggestions as to how they could be overcome?

Feedback from Participants and Partners

5. What are some of the comments/feedback that users of the neighbourhood resource centre have made about the taste test booths?
 - Probe: What do they like?
 - Probe: What do they dislike?
6. What are some of the comments/feedback that program partners at the neighbourhood resource centre have made about the taste test booths?
 - Probe: What do they like?
 - Probe: What do they dislike?

Impacts on Volunteers

7. Has being involved in the program changed anything in your regular day-to-day life, either positively or negatively? How so?
 - Probe: Has being involved in the program changed anything about your friendships or relationships with others?
 - Probe: Have you developed or enhanced any skills through your involvement in the program?
 - Probe: Have you gained any new knowledge about the community of London through your involvement in the program?
8. Has your involvement with the program led to other opportunities for you to volunteer in the community? Where and what has the experience meant for you?
 - Probe: What are some of the highlights you would like to share about your experiences in the community?
9. Overall, how would you describe your experience volunteering with this program?
10. Have we missed anything? Final Comments.
11. What was the most important thing said here today?

Appendix C - Healthy Tidbit Program Information and Consent Form

Background:

Middlesex-London Health Unit and the London Community Resource Center is currently evaluating the Healthy Tidbit Program to gather the experiences from the volunteers involved in the program.

What will happen in this focus group:

We will be asking you questions about your experiences involved in the program, including some of the challenges involved in the program, and ways to improve the program. This session will take approximately 1.5 hours in length. We will be recording the discussion using a tape recorder in order to provide an accurate record of the stories and opinions discussed.

The tape will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The tape will be accessible to only Heather Thomas and Melissa McCann, and upon completion of the evaluation the tape will be erased. The focus group transcript will be analyzed by Heather Thomas and Melissa McCann. The information will be used for program planning and evaluation purposes.

Participant Rights:

Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the focus group at any time.

Confidentiality:

Individual names will not be associated with the information in any way. During the discussion, participants may express views that may be considered confidential. As a result, we will be asking that personal or confidential information that may be shared during the session NOT be repeated outside of this group.

Report of the Findings:

A summary of the evaluation findings will be available to you when completed.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

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**Healthy Tidbit Program
Information and Consent Form**

Consent

I have read and understand the information letter and voluntarily agree to participate in this evaluation. I understand that anything I say or write will be kept confidential and that my name will not be associated with my responses in any verbal or written report on the evaluation. I understand that I may choose at any time to not answer any question that I do not want to answer. I agree to participate in this focus group.

Participant's Name
(please print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness

Witness Signature

Date

Thank you for your participation in this evaluation.

Appendix D - Healthy Tidbits Evaluation - Electronic Response

Background:

Middlesex-London Health Unit and the London Community Resource Center is currently evaluating the Healthy Tidbit Program to gather the experiences from the volunteers involved in the program.

This evaluation will involve asking you questions about your experiences involved in the program, including some of the challenges involved in the program, and ways to improve the program. Your written responses will be summarized and integrated with the feedback gathered from the focus group session with volunteers.

Your written responses will only be accessible to the evaluators involved in the evaluation (i.e. Heather Thomas, a public health dietician and myself). Your written responses and the focus group transcript will be analyzed by Heather Thomas and Melissa McCann. The information will be used for program planning and evaluation purposes.

Participant Rights:

Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the evaluation.

Confidentiality:

Individual names will not be associated with the information in any way.

Report of the Findings:

A summary of the evaluation findings will be available to you when completed.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

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C. Questions

Opening Questions

What location have you been volunteering at with the Healthy Tidbits taste test booth?

What is one thing that interested you in becoming involved in the program?

Activities as a Volunteer

12. Think about what you've been doing as a volunteer. What types of activities have you been involved in from the beginning of the program until now?

Impressions of the Program

13. What are your overall impressions of the Healthy Tidbits Program? What do you like about it? Why? What do you not like about it? Why?

Challenges in the Program

14. What challenges have you faced in the startup of taste test booths at the different food depots?

15. Have these challenges that you noted in question 3 been resolved? If so, how? If not, do you have any suggestions as to how they could be overcome?

Feedback from Participants and Partners

16. What are some of the comments/feedback that users of the neighbourhood resource centre have made about the taste test booths? What do they like? What do they dislike?

17. What are some of the comments/feedback that program partners at the neighbourhood resource centre have made about the taste test booths? What do they like? What do they dislike?

Impacts on Volunteers

18. Overall, has being involved in the program changed anything in your regular day-to-day life, either positively or negatively? How so?

a. Has being involved in the program changed anything about your friendships or relationships with others?

b. Have you developed or enhanced any skills through your involvement in the program?

c. Have you gained any new knowledge about the community of London through your involvement in the program?

19. Has your involvement with the program led to other opportunities for you to volunteer in the community?

20. Overall, how would you describe your experience volunteering with this program?

21. Do you have any final comments that you would like to share?

Appendix E - Healthy Tidbits Evaluation Interview Guide

A. Purposes of the Evaluation

- To gather the experiences of Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers and the program coordinator who were involved in planning and running the project.
- To identify the challenges encountered by Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers and the program coordinator and to identify possible areas for improvement.
- To identify changes that may have occurred in Healthy Tidbit senior volunteers' lives as a result of their participation in the project.

B. Review Confidentiality and Participation Guidelines (Informed Consent)

C. Review Tape Recording Process and Transcription

D. Questions

Activities as the Coordinator

Tell me about your role in the Healthy Tidbit program. What sorts of activities have you been involved in?

Activities of the Volunteers

1. What types of activities have the volunteers been involved in from the beginning of the program until now?

Successes of the Program

2. What are the successes of the Healthy Tidbit program?
 - Probe: Have you noticed any changes in the skills and/or knowledge of the senior volunteers?
 - Probe: Have you noticed any changes in the social connections between senior volunteers?
 - Probe: Have there been other opportunities or outcomes of the project that were unanticipated?

Challenges in the Program

3. What are some of the challenges associated with the Healthy Tidbit program?
4. Have these challenges been resolved? If so, how? If not, how could they be overcome?

Program Improvements

5. What would help to improve the program?

Feedback from Project Partners

6. Have you had any comments/feedback that project partners at the neighbourhood resource centre have made about the program? If so, please explain.

Additional Comments

7. Is there anything else you would like to add? Final Comments.

Appendix F - Healthy Tidbit Program Information and Consent Form

Background:

Middlesex-London Health Unit and the London Community Resource Center is currently evaluating the Healthy Tidbit Program to gather the experiences from the volunteers involved in the program, and the project coordinator.

What will happen in this interview:

We will be asking you questions about your experiences involved in the program, including some of the challenges involved in the program, and ways to improve the program. This interview will take approximately 1.5 hours in length. We will be recording the discussion using a tape recorder in order to provide an accurate record of the stories and opinions discussed.

The tape will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The tape will be accessible to only Heather Thomas and Melissa McCann, and upon completion of the evaluation the tape will be erased. The interview transcript will be analyzed by Heather Thomas and Melissa McCann. The information will be used for program planning and evaluation purposes.

Participant Rights:

Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the interview at any time.

Report of the Findings:

A summary of the evaluation findings will be available to you when completed.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

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**Healthy Tidbit Program
Information and Consent Form**

Consent

I have read and understand the information letter and voluntarily agree to participate in this evaluation. I understand that I may choose at any time to not answer any question that I do not want to answer. I agree to participate in this interview.

Participant's Name
(please print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Witness

Witness Signature

Date

Thank you for your participation in this evaluation.