

Food shelf client survey stressed importance of healthy food donations

March, 2015 – Clients who use the VEAP (Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People) Food Pantry in Bloomington have shed some light on their habits and values related to healthy food, thanks to a survey conducted late in 2014 by Bloomington’s Division of Public Health with funding from the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), Minnesota Department of Health. The survey results are important because the Public Health Division is partnering with VEAP on a shared goal of making healthy eating easier. The survey helped to assess food shelf clients’ needs related to eating healthy in order to give direction to achieving this shared goal.



Pictured above are VEAP food donation bins at the farmers markets.

Cost of food interferes with desire to be healthy

One of the important insights gained from this survey is that the majority of VEAP’s food shelf clients have healthy eating behaviors. Nearly all clients eat food made at home most or every day, according to the survey. Also, at least half make meals from scratch most days or every day. These are two behaviors associated with healthy eating.

However, the survey revealed a mismatch between the value VEAP clients place on health and how they view their own health status. Almost three-quarters

of VEAP clients said healthy eating is important to them, yet only about one-quarter of VEAP clients consider themselves to be in good or excellent health. About two-thirds of VEAP clients noted in the survey that “It costs too much to eat healthy.” Meats, fruits and vegetables are foods that VEAP clients said are hardest to purchase.

Clients rely on food shelf for fruits and vegetables

Another key finding from this survey is that VEAP clients need the food shelf as a source for healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables. Over half of surveyed food shelf clients said it is “somewhat hard” or “very hard” to get fruits and vegetables that do not come from VEAP. According to the survey, nearly two-thirds report eating less fruits and vegetables on weeks they don’t shop at VEAP.

VEAP Advancement Director, Patty Schulz, said, “VEAP clients know what constitutes a healthy diet but are often unable to afford fresh fruits and vegetables. That is why VEAP is making it a priority to collect, purchase and distribute high quality, nutritious foods for our neighbors in need.”

Through SHIP, VEAP and Bloomington’s Public Health Division have partnered to increase healthy food donations. “People can make a big difference in their community when they donate healthy food to VEAP’s Food Pantry,” said Joan Bulfer. “It’s how we make healthy eating easier for everyone, and that’s how we make a healthy community.”