



City of Virginia Healthy Food Campaign



healthy northland
STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP

About the City of Virginia Healthy Food Campaign

Healthy Northland and St. Louis County Public Health have been partnering with local champions in the City of Virginia to improve healthy food access since 2016. The City of Virginia Healthy Food Campaign aims to improve health by increasing access to and consumption of produce and other nutritious local foods in the City of Virginia and surrounding area. Initiatives include: the Rutabaga Project collaborative, Virginia Market Square, Growing Together – Virginia Community Gardens, and Meet Up & Chow Down Recharged summertime lunch and activities for children.

These initiatives serve community members of all ages through educational and mentorship programs, community-building activities, and direct financial and food assistance. Designed with input from community members in low-income neighborhoods, the initiatives respond to community needs to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition, which can lead to improved health.

Increasing access to healthy food makes it easier for people to maintain a healthy weight and can reduce the risk of chronic disease.

69% of residents do not get the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables a day

24% of survey respondents from Virginia were food insecure in the past 12 months

Sources: 2015 Bridge to Health Survey; Finkelstein, et al. 2009

Community gardens and nutrition education programs are well worth the investment.

\$1 invested in community gardens **can produce** **up to \$6** worth of fruits and vegetables

\$1 invested in nutrition education **saves** **\$10** in health care costs

Sources: Hagen and Rubin, 2013; Raigopal, et al, 2002

Healthy Food Campaign Impacts



“There was a kids' day at the farmers' market; they gave away 60 bike helmets and did a training with kids on safe biking. There were games and they promoted Power of Produce.”

– Program Stakeholder

Strengthening local food systems helps retain food dollars in the local economy. The Virginia Market Square contributed to the local economy by increasing spending on locally produced food and other goods. During the 2017 season:

\$6,189 In SNAP dollars and matching funds **went to** **270** adults and children **giving them** **3x** the purchasing power for local produce **grown by** **farmers** who reinvest their earnings in the community

The Virginia Market Square increased community vitality by bringing residents together around healthy eating and physical activity. Local residents surveyed agree that because of the Virginia Healthy Food Campaign they:

89% eat more local foods and have healthier diets **89%** think of their community as a healthy community **93%** feel more proud of and connected to their community

Healthy Eating Throughout Healthy Northland

In 2016-2017, Healthy Northland worked with 9 partner sites on healthy eating strategies, with five sites changing policies, systems or environments to make healthy eating easier. Further funding could support:



Transportation to healthy food shopping



Partnerships with food networks and collaboratives



Local produce in corner stores and shops



Continued promotion of local food systems

Healthy Northland is a seven-county collaborative that works to make the healthy choice, the easy choice in Northeastern Minnesota. The foundational funding for this work comes from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership, started by the Minnesota Legislature in 2009. Additional funding has been secured from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Center for Prevention. Much of this work is funded by multiple sources, but would not be possible without the foundational funding of SHIP. For more information about Healthy Northland and this study, visit us at www.healthynorthland.org