

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral Farmers Market
September 9, 2010

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Trinity Episcopal Cathedral for hosting this farm market every week to provide the community with nutritious food.

I also want to thank Capital Health and St. Francis Medical Center for partnering with Trinity Cathedral to offer these critical health screenings. This is a great resource for the Trenton community.

I also want to recognize Clara Gregory, who works in the Department's Division of HIV/AIDS, Clara volunteers her time to manage this farm market because she understands the importance of bringing healthy food choices to all our communities. Clara—thank you for the great work you do.

Minority and Multicultural Health Month

It is great to be here today to celebrate September as Minority and Multicultural Health month. Every September we use this month to bring greater attention to health issues that affect our minority communities so we can eliminate health disparities in our state.

One of my visions is that in the future we won't need a month to focus on minority health issues and the discussion of health disparities becomes obsolete.

My hope is that the disparities gap will be closed and health care will be delivered in a way that meets the needs of a patient regardless of their race and ethnicity. Until that time, the Department, under the leadership of Governor Christie, and our community partners will work day and night to eliminate barriers to health care and develop solutions to ensure health equity for all our residents.

This year 50 community based-organizations and healthcare agencies are holding events across the state to educate and inform New Jerseyans on how to lead healthier lives.

Our theme for the month is *Healthy Me, Healthy Us*, which encourages residents – those of all cultural backgrounds, from the youngest to the oldest – to actively participate in their own health, and in the health of their families and communities. Part of taking control of your health is ensuring you have the proper nutrition to stay strong and healthy.

Shaping NJ Partnership

Today is an exciting day because we are taking another step forward to expand access to healthy lifestyles for all communities. Today, we are also here to announce that the Trinity Episcopal Church is now part of the Department's Shaping NJ Partnership.

This partnership of more than 100 diverse stakeholders is committed to improving resident's access to healthy foods and increasing opportunities for exercise.

One of the partnership's goals is to enable residents in every neighborhood in New Jersey to have convenient access to affordable fruit, vegetables and other nutrient-rich food and beverages, like what is available today at the farm market.

We are working to promote better nutrition by improving access to fruit and vegetables at retail outlets, promoting the delivery of regionally grown produce, supporting and promoting home gardens, and increasing access to nutritious foods at soup kitchens and food pantries

Increasing access to nutritious food is especially important in our minority communities because they bear the greatest burden of obesity.

Adult obesity is highest among the African American community (36%) compared to Hispanics (25%) and whites (23%). And childhood obesity is highest among the Hispanic community.

The month of September is Childhood Obesity Awareness Month and since we've also sent our children back to school this month, it is especially important that we pack them healthy lunches, discourage consumption of sugary soft drinks and provide them with healthy snacks both in school and after school. It's also important to serve healthy, balanced meals at home with plenty of vegetables.

If children develop healthy eating habits when they are young, those lifestyle choices will remain with them throughout their lives.

Obesity is a serious public health problem that puts residents at greater risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and some cancers, so it is imperative to address obesity before it can impact the overall quality of your health.

Healthy Eating

In addition to reducing obesity, we know there are other great benefits of eating healthy. Studies have shown that benefits of healthy eating include reducing the risk of dying from coronary heart disease and developing high blood pressure and diabetes, and helping maintain healthy bones.

With the documented benefits of eating healthy, our job at the Department is to reduce barriers that residents encounter when they try to eat healthy. We know that nutritious foods are often more expensive and scarce in some areas. So my commitment to you is that we will continue working with great community partners, like Trinity Cathedral, to increase access to healthy foods in all New Jersey neighborhoods.

Closing

Today you are making a commitment to your health by making healthy choices and I hope you will continue taking steps to a healthier life.

Throughout the month we will have more events that will give residents the tools to take control of their health. Please take advantage of these events across the state.

There is a full list of events at the Department's web site nj.gov/health.

Working together we can reduce health disparities and build a stronger, healthier New Jersey.