

A Successful Pilot Program Between Public Health and An Area Public Library

Franklin County Public Health, Ohio



The Environmental Health Educator at Franklin County Public Health was onboarded during COVID-19 while the health department was still largely focused on the COVID-19 response. Community organizations were still not operating “normally”, and no-contact programming was still being utilized at the time. The health educator was tasked with expanding health education activities throughout the county in the midst of a pandemic. Subsequently, finding ways to do so lead to creative partnerships and a successful pilot program.

The Health Educator reached out to a local horticultural and educational institution, Franklin Park Conservatory, to inquire about seed donation. Luckily, Franklin Park Conservatory had a large seed inventory from previous years and was able to donate a large quantity of herb, flower, fruit, and vegetable seeds as well as gardening education materials to the health department. With hundreds of seeds in hand, the next challenge was to find a way to get those seeds and educational materials distributed in late winter/early spring while people were still spending most of their time at home.

After receiving a suggestion that local libraries might be able to help, the health educator reached out to a local library and pitched an idea to use the library as a distribution center. The library was more than happy to assist and had perfected no-contact programs that were made available for pick-up. Based on their programming experience throughout the pandemic, the library knew they could assist in creating an adult educational program using the seeds and educational materials. The library and health educator landed on a pilot project to create adult “take & make” gardening and flower kits. Each kit was assembled in a bag with simple instructions, a corresponding assortment of seeds, potting soil, peat pots, and educational materials. The kits were then available for no-contact pick-up on designated days at the library. The adult gardening and flower “take & make” kits were advertised in the library’s programming newsletter and on social media.

Sixty take & make kits were assembled (see photo), and all were taken by community members to use. In addition to the “take & make” kits, the library was able to start a seed library with the additional seeds donated by the health department. The library plans to make the seed library a permanent resource for community members and since the success of the kits, both the health department and library see the opportunity for ongoing partnerships to increase health education opportunities in Franklin County.



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