

# ISSUE BRIEF: ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

## MUNSON 2015/16 COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Increasing access to healthy food options provides people with the opportunity to make healthy food choices. Providing healthy foods in existing establishments, increasing the availability of full-service supermarkets, and supporting local farm-to-table efforts (such as farmers markets and community gardens) have been shown to increase availability of healthy food.

### Severity

#### *Risk or mortality and morbidity associated with the problem*

- Over 23 million people in the US live in food deserts (Census Tracts that lack access to stores where affordable, healthy food is available).
- Almost 15% of American households experience food insecurity at least occasionally during the year, meaning their access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources.
- Fewer than 15% of adults in the US eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day.

### Magnitude

#### *Number of people impacted by the problem*

- Within the five-county region, the US Department of Agriculture has designated two Census Tracts as food deserts, both located in Grand Traverse County. Together, 10,430 people live in Census Tracts 5511 and 5513.
- An estimated 10,230 households in the five-county region experience food insecurity at least occasionally (15% of 68,206 households).
- An estimated 20,421 adults in the five-county region eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day (15% of the 136,143 population age 18+).

### Impact

#### *Improving this problem would have a positive impact on health, quality of life or health disparities*

- Typically, food deserts are located in communities with an abundance of fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer foods high in calories but low in nutritional value. Individuals who live in food deserts are more likely to be overweight or obese, potentially because the relative low cost of junk food promotes over-consumption.
- Nutrition standards and policies that align with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* increase access to healthy food and beverages while limiting access to less healthy food. These policies can be implemented widely, in worksites, schools, early learning centers, cafeterias, hospitals, living facilities and others places where food is served or available.
- Low income women are more likely than their higher-paid counterparts to return to work earlier after childbirth and to jobs that make it challenging for them to breastfeed. Babies who are breastfed may be less likely to become obese later in life.

### Sustainability

#### *Resources are available and barriers are surmountable*

Resources in the community include:

- Shape Up North and Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program
- Munson Family Practice and other primary care providers, including FQHCs and Child & Adolescent Health Centers
- MSU-Extension, other colleges, schools, and early childhood programs
- Farmers, farmers markets, and advocacy groups like the Groundwork Center for Sustainable Communities
- Restaurants, school and work cafeterias, food pantries, Meals on Wheels
- Businesses and worksite wellness programs
- Health Departments' maternal and child health programs

### Achievability

#### *Achievable and measureable outcomes are possible within three years*

Metrics include indicators collected by Community Health Solutions:

- Food Insecurity Rate
- Child Food Insecurity Rate

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MUNSON 2015/16 COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## *Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau Counties*

### Grand Traverse Region Access to Healthy Food Statistics

**Food Deserts:** The two food deserts in the five-county region are located in the Grand Traverse Region; approximately 10,000 people live in them

**Food Insecurity Rate:** The proportion of the total population that experiences food insecurity at least occasionally ranges from 12.9% in Grand Traverse County to 15.1% in Kalkaska County; rates in all counties are below State (16.4%) and above Nation (11.8%)

**Child Food Insecurity Rate:** The proportion of the population age 0-17 that experiences food insecurity at least occasionally is below State rate (20.9%) and tracks or exceeds US rate (18.9%): Antrim—25.2%; Benzie—22.5%; Grand Traverse—18.7%; Kalkaska—23.3%; and Leelanau—18.9%

### Major Forces of Change in the Community

16 members of the Munson CHNA Advisory Committee participated in a facilitated discussion to identify forces of change in the community. The following forces impact access to healthy food in the region:

- Shape Up North and Fruit & Vegetable Prescription Program
- Consumer voice: organic, gluten-free, etc.
- Availability of technology, such as electronic benefit transfer
- Collaboration/collective impact
- Easy access to consumer information
- Grants brought into the area by the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance

### Community Conversations

111 community residents and stakeholders participated in one of five Community Conversations sponsored by local multipurpose collaborative bodies. Each one answered the question, “What can we do here to move closer to our vision of a healthy community?” In every one of the Community Conversations, the collective answer to this focus questions included improving access to healthy food:

Antrim	Benzie	Grand Traverse	Kalkaska	Leelanau
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

#### What Matters to You? Survey

246 residents of Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties completed the “What Matters to You?” Survey.

When asked what about the most important factors for a healthy community, they ranked “access to healthy food” third, behind “access to health care” and “good jobs and healthy economy.”

#### Health Care Provider Survey

50 physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants from Kalkaska Memorial Medical Center, Munson Medical Center and Paul Oliver Hospital completed a brief Health Care Provider Survey.

When asked about the most important factors for a healthy community, respondents ranked “access to healthy food” sixth, behind “access to health care”, “good jobs and healthy economy”, “healthy lifestyles”, “good schools and high value on education”, “strong family life.”