

The Promising Effects of Pathfinder's Mobile Market Program on Food Insecure Residents in Otsego County, NY



Introduction

- Pathfinder Village is a community in Edmeston, NY in which people with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities are able to thrive and find their talents and values
- Beginning in 2018, staff at Pathfinder Village began a Pathfinder Produce Mobile Market accommodating those who struggle with a medical condition and food insecurity in its surrounding Otsego County community
- The program, approved by grants from the LCHP (Leatherstocking Collaborative Health Partners), entails delivering fresh produce along with recipes to those that qualify for the program
- The LCHP approved 50 vouchers for Medicaid recipients, in which 48% suffer from mental illness as their major chronic condition – 16% have diabetes or are pre-diabetic and 8% suffer from COPD
- The program's staff includes members of Pathfinder Village with developmental disabilities making it a very meaningful work opportunity

Rural Reality

- Otsego County is located in a rural region of New York
- Rural counties have more "persistent poverty" than urban areas, and in 2017, the rural poverty rate was 16.4% as opposed to urban areas having 12.9%⁴
- Relatedly, Otsego County is a food desert in which access to food that is healthy and affordable is not convenient due to the proximity of grocery stores in the area
- Food insecurity is defined by the USDA as a "lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life."³
- In 2017, the percentage of child food insecurity in Otsego County was 18.7%, making it higher than the percentage in New York state³
- The cost of fresh produce, and the proximity to grocery stores, are two factors that limit access to healthy food, making the mobile market beneficial to the area

Conclusion

- Though the data comes from a comparison between one question on two surveys, the results are very promising
- 28.6% more individuals indicated in the second survey that they ate three to four servings of fruits and vegetables as opposed to initial survey
- Furthermore, there were no "none" responses in the sixth month survey, showing at least some consumption of healthy produce
- Pathfinder Village's Mobile Market Program is improving Otsego County residents' access to fruits and vegetables
- This increased consumption statistically leads to a healthier lifestyle which can aid ongoing medical conditions

References

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The Power of Healthy Food

- Many medical conditions can be improved by eating healthier, making the food desert and poverty rates of Otsego County unfavorable
- According to scientists from Imperial College London who analyzed 95 studies on fruit and vegetable intake, the consumption of fruits and veggies profoundly improves medical conditions⁵
- While ten servings is recommended, even eating two and a half servings of fruits and vegetables is associated with a 4% reduction in risk of cancer, and a 15% reduction in the risk of early death⁵

Has the Market worked?

- Significantly, University of Buffalo recently received a federal grant from the National Cancer Institute to study the impact of mobile markets on the health of rural communities in NYS, showing the impact similar markets are making¹
- In order to see the effects the program has had thus far, each voucher recipient was given a survey prior to beginning, and then another survey six months after the produce delivery program began
- There was a 78% survey completion rate for the initial survey, and an 80% survey completion rate for the 6-month survey
- The two surveys were then analyzed and compared

Results

"This has really been helpful since it is hard for me to get to the grocery store for fresh produce, especially since my stroke has required me to change my diet. It has improved my health and quality of life. BTW-your delivery people are wonderful, friendly and very upbeat. Thank you."-Voucher Recipient (Sixth month survey)

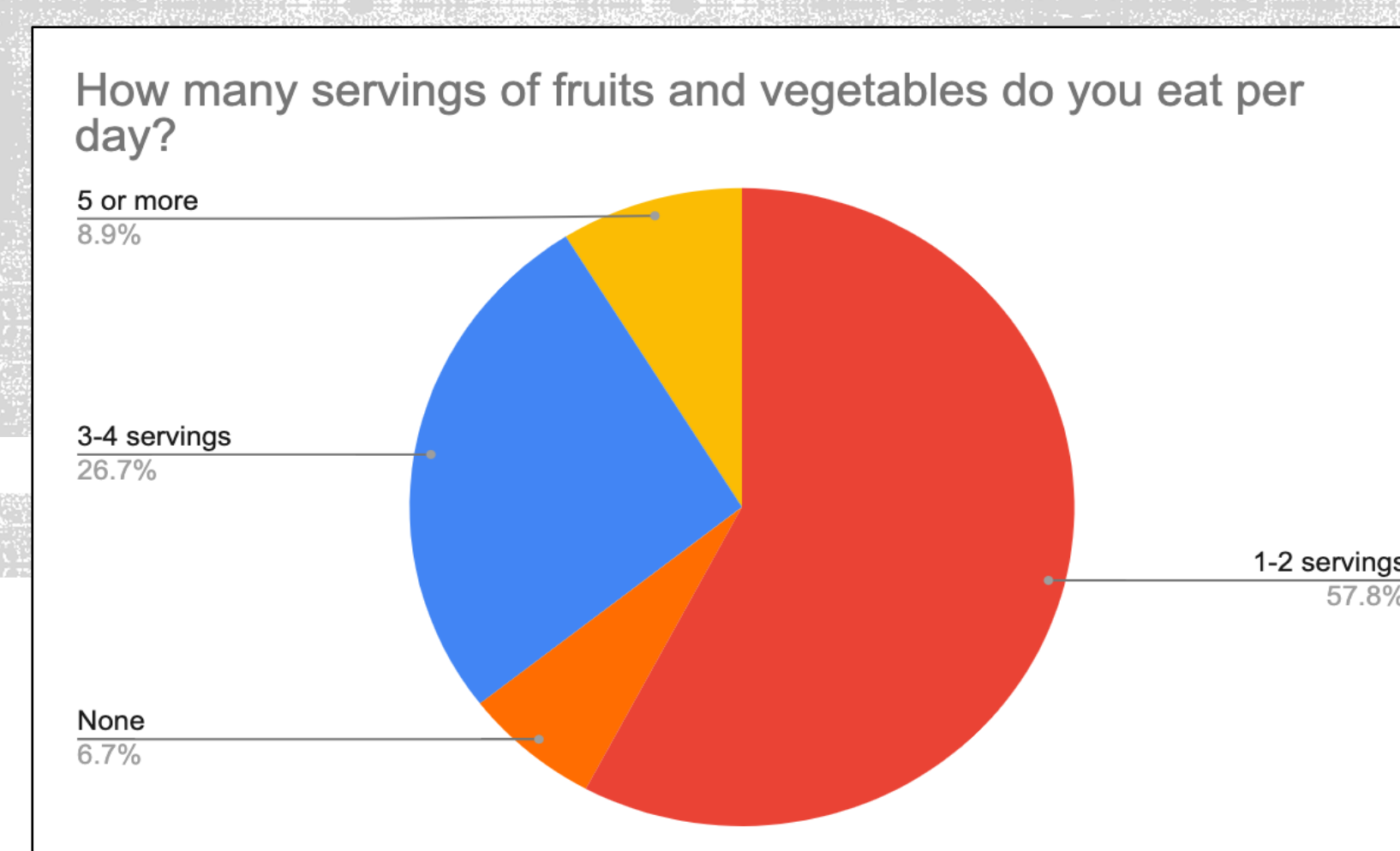


Figure 1: Initial survey data showing the percentage of individuals who eat a certain amount of servings

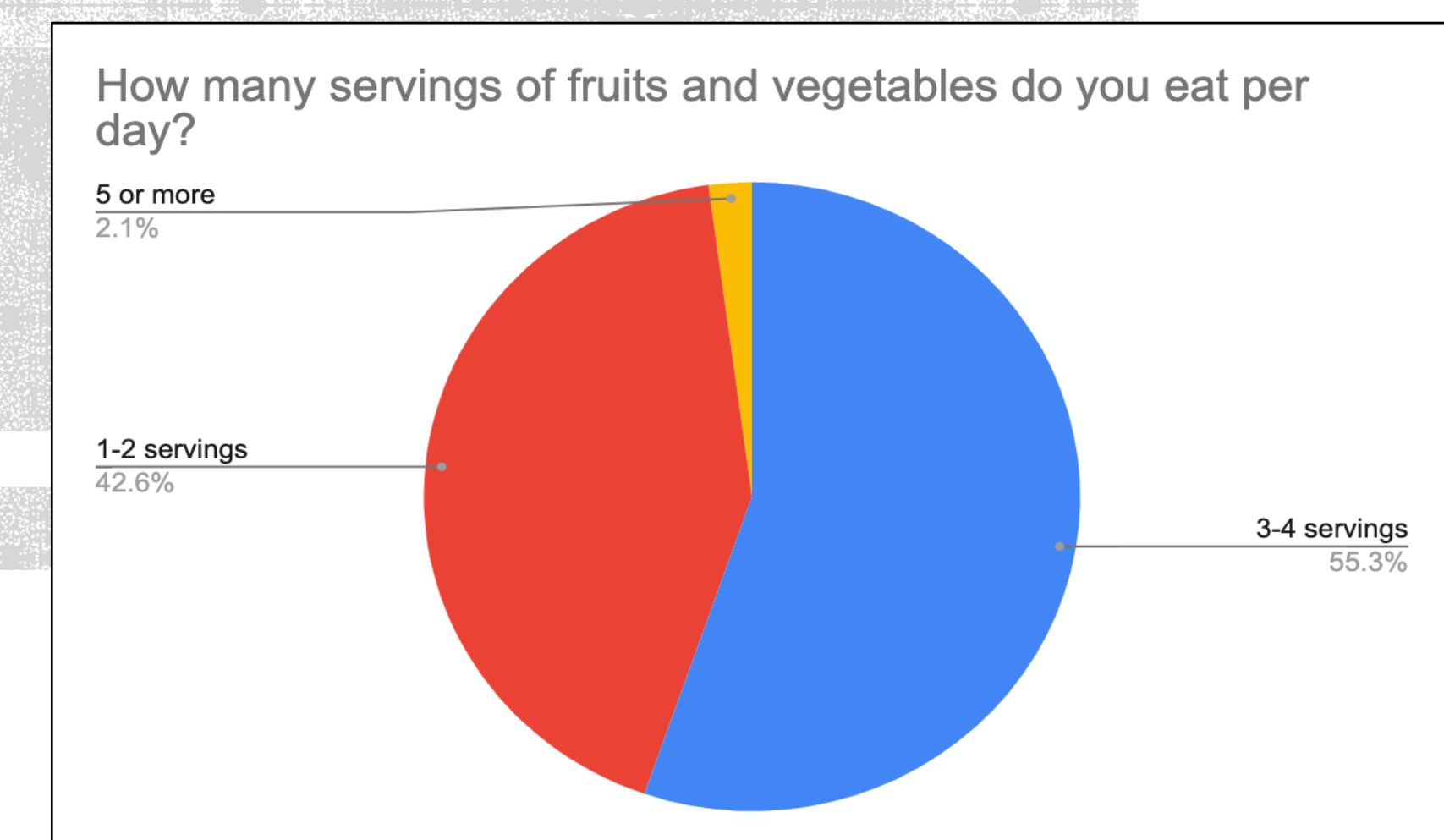


Figure 2: Sixth month survey data showing the percentage of individuals who eat a certain amount of servings

Future Directions

- A proposal in May 2019 was accepted to expand the program with another 50 vouchers to Lantern Hill Mobile Home Park in Oneonta, NY, with the goal of expanding the program to neighboring counties
- However, because there are individuals in Otsego County itself who qualify and are on the waitlist, the original program is clearly popular and needs more funding
- The Pathfinder Produce Market needs to continue sharing data that shows the benefit of this program to gain attention by insurance companies which will provide enough financial assistance for the program to keep running without relying on grant funding
- Furthermore, the direct effects of eating more fruits and vegetables on the medical conditions and hospital stays of each voucher recipient needs to be studied more in order to determine if healthcare costs are being reduced

