

2024

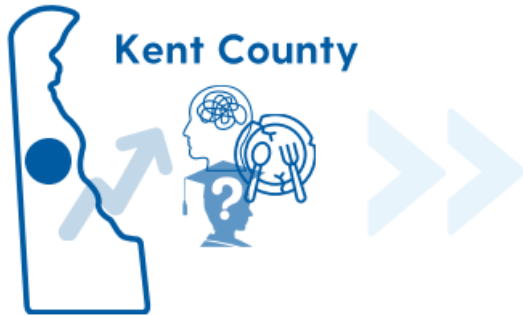
Increasing Community Cohesion and Healthy Food Exposure through Coalition Organized Community Dinner



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION

RELEVANCE

Of Delaware's three counties, Kent County has the highest rate of food insecurity, poor mental health days and high school dropouts.



Dover

Members of Dover organizations highlight the need for community dinners to increase community cohesion and provide healthy meals.



RESPONSE

University of Delaware Cooperative Extension brought together **81** individuals representing **45** organizations to partner on projects to **improve** the health of Dover youth in the areas of mental health, education, and food access/physical health.

Dover Youth Committee (DYC)

3 Community Dinners in 2024



- Healthy Meal
- Engaging Activity

- Cooking demonstration that served as the meal
- Creating a calming jar, and creating a holiday financial savings booklet.



RESULTS

The community dinners aim to increase community cohesion and provide a healthy meal.

Votes on their favorite



37.5% Activity ✓

25% Food ✓

25% Atmosphere ✓

12.5% Networking ✓

The **activity, atmosphere, and networking** tie into the community dinner's efforts to increase community cohesion.



Menu Items



Throughout the dinners some youth reported it was their first time trying certain meals and specific vegetables.

95%

Would make the demonstrated recipe at home

100%

Planned to use the financial booklet they created.



RELEVANCE

Of Delaware's three counties, Kent County has the highest rate of food insecurity, poor mental health days and high school dropouts. In Dover, there are disjointed efforts to make changes to improve youth health. Members of Dover organizations highlight the need for community dinners to increase community cohesion and provide healthy meals.

RESPONSE

University of Delaware Cooperative Extension brought together 81 individuals representing 45 organizations to partner on projects to improve the health of Dover youth in the areas of mental health, education, and food access/physical health. Members of the Dover Youth Committee (DYC) planned and implemented three community dinners in 2024. Each dinner provided a healthy meal and an engaging activity that aligned with a DYC subcommittee. These activities included a cooking demonstration that served as the meal, creating a calming jar, and creating a holiday financial savings booklet. Several DYC members were in attendance and a table was set up to connect committee members and their resources to the community members in attendance. In total 75 individuals, including 36 youth, attended the dinners.

RESULTS

The community dinners aim to increase community cohesion and provide a healthy meal. According to data gathered, those goals are being met. People that voted reported their favorite part of the dinner was the activity (37.5%), food (25%), atmosphere (25%), and networking (12.5%). The activity, atmosphere, and networking tie into the community dinner's efforts to increase community cohesion. Several attendees participated in multiple dinners further highlighting this cohesion.

At every dinner all attendees are offered a salad and a healthy main course, exposing community members to healthy foods. Throughout the dinners some youth reported it was their first time trying certain meals and specific vegetables.

Beyond this, attendees reported that they intended to change their behavior due to the activities. When asked if they would make the demonstrated recipe at home, 95% of respondents said yes. One youth who attended and reported never having chili before, said they loved it and wanted to make it at home. Furthermore, 100% of respondents said they planned to use the financial booklet they created.

RECOGNITION

Sustainable Coastal Communities Initiatives provides funding for the Dover Youth Committee and community dinners. NeighborGood Partners, DEMCO, Delaware State University Cooperative Extension, and private donations have financially supported the community dinner initiatives. DYC members representing several organizations assist in the planning and implementation of the community dinners.

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

Dover has disjointed efforts to improve youth's health. University of Delaware Cooperative Extension brought together individuals representing many organizations to improve the health of Dover youth through community dinners. The community dinners continue to meet their goals of increasing community cohesion and providing a healthy meal to Dover youth and adults.

Reference:

1. County Health Rankings and Road Maps. Delaware. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/compare-counties?compareCounties=10001%2C10003%2C10005&year=2024>