

# Green Rx: A Community-Clinic Link Supporting Patients and Local Farmers Markets

by: Katie Larsen

## SUMMARY

The Community Wellness Program Green Rx program is a great example of a community-clinic link. Supporting increased access to healthy food is a benefit to both our clinic patients and our local farmers.

Innovative programs like Green Rx encourage patients to be directly involved in their health and provide a wonderful platform for the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to provide hands on education with a motivated patient.



## CHALLENGE

For people across the country, accessing healthy, affordable food is often difficult and for Native Americans in the US, this reality is compounded further by chronic diseases plaguing their communities.

According to the National Congress of American Indian's Center for Diabetes Research and Policy Research Center over 80% of AI/AN adults age 20-74 are overweight or obese and 30% of these individuals are estimated to have pre-diabetes. Childhood obesity rates often exceed 50% in tribal communities and 1 in 2 AI/AN children will develop type 2

diabetes in their lifetime.

With over 300 diabetes case managed patients at Toiyabe Indian Health Project, many of them eating from commodity food programs, clinicians and health care providers have an uphill battle when encouraging their patients to eat better and add fresh foods to their diets in the hopes of bettering their health.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Programs like Green Rx can help to further the community-clinic link by making chronic disease management a focus in the doctors office, as well as in the community. Through initiatives that support both patient health and the local economy, there is increased investment from many different agencies to ensure long lasting success of the program.

*"Patients are overly grateful to receive a prescription from a medical clinic, which allows them to pick up healthy foods from our local farmer's markets. It is truly a new way of creating healthy lifestyles in our health care system."*

- Matthew Larsen RDN/CDE

## Contact

### Katie Larsen

Toiyabe Indian Health Project  
52 Tu Su Lane  
Bishop, CA 93514  
760-873-8851 phone  
<http://www.toiyabe.us/>

## SOLUTION

The Toiyabe Indian Health Project Community Wellness Program (CWP) recognizes that one of the keys to increasing health in our patients is through better access to affordable, healthy food options. We support farmers markets in an effort to reduced chronic diseases and support our local Tribal farmers.

Through collaboration with our Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, we developed a Green Rx program which supports both our patients and our farmers markets. We have been able to begin addressing the glaring disparity between what patients are being encouraged to do, change their eating habits, and what they are able to afford.

## RESULTS

The Green Rx program has been well received in its first year, encouraging many patients to seek the education and patient care of the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and to visit their local Tribal farmers market, increasing their purchasing power for healthy fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts. In addition to the benefit to the patients currently being seen by the RDN, many potential patients are inquiring about the Green Rx program and seeking first time visits for nutrition and diabetes education and care.

And the success of the program hasn't just influenced the patients! It has been an economic enhancement for both the Big Pine and Bishop Paiute Tribe farmers markets, bringing new customers to their market, furthering a conversation around supporting local foods to support the local economy.



## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

With external funding supporting the Green Rx program, it is the hope of the Community Wellness Program that this initiative will continue to bring patients to the clinic, encouraging them to engage with the RDN for both nutrition and diabetes care and education well beyond any grant funding.

The ongoing support and exposure that this program brings to the local Tribal farmers markets will help to sustain the access to fresh, local, healthy produce, encouraging others in the community to support their local farmers.

It the hope of the CWP that the current and future success of this program inspires further clinic conversation, helping to establish other community-clinic programs that encourage patients to seek a healthy lifestyle.