

**Public Health Messaging Project: Evaluation Paper**

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In the United States, obesity is one of the main contributors to poor health quality and leads to health diseases such as heart disease, stroke, and malnutrition (Oldroyd, et. al., 2022). Nationally, the obesity rate averages around 35-40% (CDC, 2024). Locally in Virginia, the average obesity rate is 40-45% (CDC, 2024). One of the top 5 health concerns where I reside is obesity, according to Prince William County Hospital's annual Needs Assessment (UVA, 2022), with their top needs being to manage and prevent chronic diseases. Chronic disease and overall health go hand in hand. When national and local health data are factored in, obesity, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure are among the top percentages contributing to overall health (Health Gov, n.d). Keeping this information and data in mind, my project was based on healthy eating habits in my community, especially with low-income individuals and families. I have volunteered in the food pantry over the past few months with an organization called SERVE.

Food pantries also need to ensure that underserved communities receive healthy food choices and not just unhealthy food donated all the time. This organization in Manassas, Virginia, accepts donations from local food sources like Starbucks, Costco, Target, Giant, and more. My goal was to increase awareness among others and those who volunteer in my community to donate healthy foods and limit the unhealthy food choices given to low-income individuals and families.

### **Health Behavior Theory**

The health behavior theory used in my research and campaign was based on the Health Belief Model. This behavior theory has seven constructs: perceived susceptibility, perceived seriousness, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, modifying cofactors, cues to action, and self-efficacy (Beyera, O'Brien, & Campbell, 2022). The constructs used in my social media campaign were perceived benefits and cues to action. These constructs were chosen to capture

the audience and call them to action by providing some information on the impact of obesity. I also provided information on ways to change the food given out through SWAP programs (McKee, et. al., 2021). With the knowledge of benefitting others, I hoped that they too could affect change, and when they think of donating food to food pantries, they will also think about providing food that will benefit the recipient's health (cues to action). My purpose was to increase awareness of the problem of obesity and how food insecurities can affect the poor and low-income individuals around us.

### **Social Media Platforms Used**

I decided to post my social media campaign on Facebook because I have a lot of friends there, and it would reach multiple audiences. Most of my friends are from schools that I attended, and they all have different kinds of jobs, so I know it would reach many people. Others can also share this to spread the word about healthy eating and promote awareness of donating healthy foods to nearby food banks. I do not post many things on social media; I am not a massive fan of it, to be honest. However, I think the audience is broad on my Facebook, so it is the best option.

### **Evaluation**

I recently posted this social media campaign on Facebook, which had few views. However, it had about 30 views and 12 likes. I would change the video by adding background music, not just my voice. Music greatly impacts and influences people, and you can change your mood with music. I was unsure how to add music to the background of my post since I was using PowerPoint to produce my short video. With more time and experience creating videos, I could produce something more impactful.

### **Reflection**

This project was very fast paced. However, I learned a lot about what you can do to promote your ideas for others to see and share. Given the short time allotted for this project, I do not necessarily think I did the best job I could. However, I put in my best effort and produced something that many can understand. Hopefully, it will impact people's thoughts about food banks and donating food.

*I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violations of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned.*

- Michelle Shufelt

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