

Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation

WHITESBURG, KENTUCKY

THE FARMACY FOOD PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM

In the southeastern Kentucky coal fields, rates of diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease are among the highest in the nation. Communities are isolated by the mountainous terrain, with few local health and human services available in the sparsely populated towns. High chronic disease can be tied back to deeply embedded cultural habits like frying most food, smoking and being sedentary.

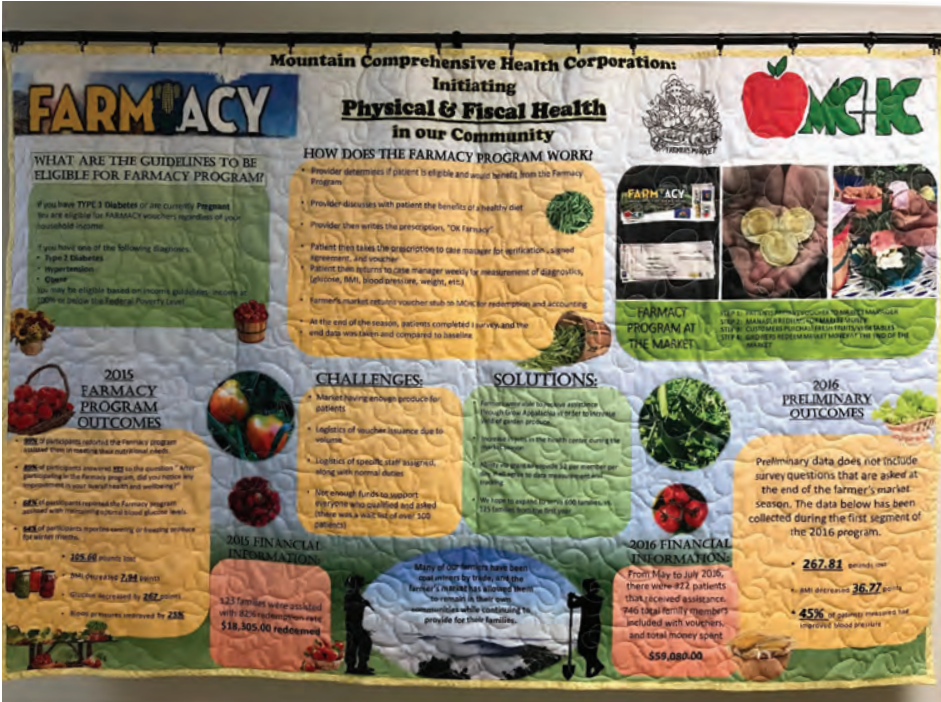
Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation (MCHC) designed the Farmacy program to overcome these obstacles

to health. Now in its second year, the Farmacy program has documented significant improvements in family health while also providing financial incentives to local farmers. The farmers market has become a community gathering spot that relieves isolation and renews local pride in Appalachian made goods.

From June to September, MCHC provides food prescriptions for patients to use at the local farmers market. These are worth \$2 per day per household member, meaning a family of four gets a prescription worth \$56/week. Providers write prescriptions for those who have a chronic disease, Type 1 diabetes, pregnancy or poverty. Patients bring their prescription to a case manager who determines level of family need. Wooden tokens serve as currency.

The Farmacy program at Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation provides fresh local produce prescriptions to needy families while helping to sustain area farmers and support community development in rural Appalachia. Health outcomes tracked by University of Kentucky show significant improvements in BMI, HgbA1C and blood pressure control among participants.





ONE FAMILY'S STORY

*Bill and *Alice were sweethearts who traveled together on truck routes before settling again into the Kentucky foothills. Changes in the economy led to multiple job changes for them both, from trucking to coal to unemployment. A combination of scarce resources and despondency sapped their reserves, with Bill becoming morbidly obese and diabetic, and Alice obese and sedentary.

The Farmacy program turned their lives around. Faced with insulin dependence and a deteriorating lifestyle, Bill enrolled in the program. He thought it would just help his family afford some food. But nutrition education helped him choose to grill or bake food rather

than fry. Vegetables at the market were unfamiliar, but Bill found he enjoyed trying them. He learned to eat okra as a fresh food, snacking on it when hungry and becoming satisfied. Meanwhile his body mass index (BMI), blood pressure, cholesterol and glycated hemoglobin level (HgbA1c) all dropped dramatically.

Bill found himself taking more walks and leading his family to a healthier lifestyle. He no longer needs insulin. Alice has a new sense of community and looks forward to seeing folks at the Saturday market, swapping stories of recipes, canning and feeling healthy. The family puts away food for the winter and looks forward to many healthy years ahead.

*Names have been changed for anonymity.

INTERVENTIONS

FOOD PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM (THE FARMACY PROGRAM) OFFERS DISEASE SPECIFIC FOOD VOUCHERS FOR THE LOCAL FARMERS MARKET (322 PATIENTS AND 784 TOTAL PEOPLE IN 2016 AND \$117,000 INVESTED IN THE WORK OF LOCAL FARMERS)

LOCAL UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP HELPS TRACK HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS (CUMULATIVE BMI DROPPED BY 37 POINTS, 268 POUNDS CUMULATIVE WEIGHT LOSS)

NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS HAVE LED TO 70% OF USERS CANNING OR FREEZING PRODUCE FOR THE OFF SEASON

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE USDA SUMMER FEEDING PROGRAM HELPS KIDS WHEN SCHOOL IS OUT

PARTNERS

COMMUNITY FARM ALLIANCE

GROW APPALACHIA

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

USDA

WELL CARE