



El Monte Leads the State in Heart Disease Related Deaths



Written by Administrator

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El Monte leads the state in coronary heart disease. If that wasn't shocking enough news for the more than 150 El Monte residents who attended the Healthy Eating and Active Living Community Workshop held Wednesday evening, August 5, there was more to follow.

The in order, the following causes of death for El Monteans is stroke, and cancer.

"El Monte falls into the same statistics as those for Los Angeles County when it comes to stroke and cancer," said Matt Raimi, of Raimi and Associates.

The fourth leading cause of death in El Monte is pneumonia/flu while in Los Angeles County fourth place is Emphysema.

"Many of these are related to physical activity with coronary heart disease and diabetes topping the list," said Raimi.

In studies taken in El Monte in 1990, ten percent of El Monte adults were obese. In 2008 that number increased to 25 percent.

"The rate of obesity in adults doubled and in children the incidence of obesity tripled," said Pilar Lorenzana-Campo of the Prevention Institute.

El Monte leads the state in the incidences of diabetes. With 12.5 percent of adults acquiring the disease. This number is 50% higher than Los Angeles County and the State of California.

How did this happen?

Statewide people rely on fast foods. In fact, 56% of retail food sources are of the fast food variety. The next available retail food sources are convenience stores and only 14% of our food purchases are at supermarkets.

"Hey, if it isn't fried, it isn't from El Monte," quipped a co-worker.

"We made choices to have these types of foods and communities," said Lorenzana-Campo. "We can do something about it."

Increasing evidence shows that the characteristics of the physical environment, from the presence of parks to the availability of healthy foods in neighborhood stores, are directly linked to eating and activity behavior. Low income communities and communities of color often face

particularly significant environmental barriers to optimal eating and activity.

Change. That's what this workshop was all about.

El Monte has added a health and wellness element into its general plan. Along with a \$330 thousand grant it wants the community to decide what types of programs, facilities and stores it wants.

Residents were divided into groups where they were asked what types of things to prevented them from being active and what would encourage activity and healthy food choices.

The consensus was: more parks, health services, healthy foods, visually attractive streets where one could go out and meet neighbors and bike paths.

The program, lead by the Community Services Department and the Community and Senior Services Division of the City El Monte will host another community forum in October. Once resident's input is gathered the City can focus on implementing what the community really wants.