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ENCOURAGING POLICY, SYSTEMS AND ENVIRONMENT CHANGES TO SUPPORT HEALTHY LIFESTYLES THROUGH ACADEMIC-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) remain a strong public health challenge, having impacts both in terms of human suffering and socioeconomic harm. NCDs are the leading cause of death globally, and account for greater than 40% of premature deaths in those under the age of 70, with the greatest impact occurring in low-to middle-income countries. To address these issues, a culture of health must be created, targeting individuals where they live, work and play. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a community-based wellness program offered by a local grassroots coalition in a poor, underserved, rural, Midwest, largely Hispanic county. Monthly health screenings and education as well as referrals to local resources are provided at a variety of sites (manufacturing, low-income housing, service, and faith-based) to address the multiple determinants which underlie chronic disease development. Additionally, the coalition

provides feedback to the sites concerning health needs of the population. An academic-community partnership between a nurse researcher and the coalition was created with the support of a clinical and translational sciences grant to collect information concerning policy, systems and environmental changes (PSE) secondary to this program. Multiple PSE changes have been noted as documented by qualitative data and quantitative scores on the CDC community health evaluation and group assessment (CHANGE) tool. This program is reaching vulnerable population and creating PSE changes supporting healthy policies across all sites and the community including instituting tobacco free policies, making healthy food options cheaper, and creating options for physical activity.

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