

Reversing the Effects of Time and Teaching Others to Live Younger

Patricia Terstenyak

At A Glance

Vel Scott's Healthy You classes are teaching invaluable lessons on healthy eating and identifying quality food. Ultimately through participant training, these skills are infiltrating the larger Cleveland community to address health disparities in African American woman. Program participants learn hands-on cooking skills, affordable healthy grocery shopping tactics, and develop affirmative thought processes. In time they teach these skills to their friends, family and communities as Healthy You Ambassadors.

Public Health Challenge

Colossal diversity is one of Cleveland's greatest assets, however, it is not without disparity. African American women suffer from chronic disease at much higher rates than the general population. Nationally, African American women suffer from heart disease at three times the rate of Caucasian and are 60 percent more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic white women. Chronic disease is the number one cause of death in the United States, and incidence rates are on the rise. Low income individuals, especially African American women, are at high risk for developing chronic disease. Lack of health education, lack of access to fresh produce, low income rates, chronic stress and neighborhood safety have all been linked to these disparities. Due to circumstances out of their control, many low-income residents of Cleveland do not see healthy living as an achievable reality.

Approach

Vel Scott's Healthy You initiative empowers participants to see their potential in becoming a healthier version of themselves. Not only does the program instill confidence, it also provides the skills needed to commit to a healthier lifestyle while still enjoying the bold flavors of their culture. Lead by Vel Scott, participants learn hands-on cooking skills, affordable healthy grocery shopping tactics, and develop affirmative thought processes. Vel has such an influence on her participants that many become Healthy You Ambassadors and spread their knowledge to friends, family, neighbors, coworkers and fellow church members, ultimately dispersing this knowledge to the greater community.



Find Out More

After her husband passed from diabetes complications, Vel's goal has been to give individuals the skills needed to become a healthier version of themselves. However, Vel cannot accomplish these goals on her own. Vel Scott's Healthy You initiative is looking for individuals who are impassioned by improving their own health and the health of others through healthy eating. Visit her Facebook page for more information:

<https://www.facebook.com/VelScottHealthyYou/?fref=ts>

Results

With funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a total of 13 participants learned how to shop, cook and eat healthier, even when on a tight budget, and how to effectively share what they've learned with other members of their community. Through the CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, two, six-week, 18-hour Vel Scott's Healthy YOU sessions were offered, followed by a three-week, 9-hour, "Train-the-Trainer" session taught by a public health professional. Participants completed pre- and post-surveys and conveyed greatly increased knowledge of healthy cooking and eating practices. They also contributed video testimonials relaying their most important class take-aways and outlined an engagement plan for program graduates to reach the broader community.

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Everyone was able to tell us what not to do, but I don't recall anyone telling me 'here's some suggestions, have you tried this'. It was always just 'don't eat it, it's going to kill you'.

- Vel Scott, Owner and Creator

What's Next

Vel Scott's Healthy You successfully recruited 13 ambassadors to disperse her teachings throughout their community. Almost all of the ambassadors were African American and resided within the community. They were not only taught about healthy foods, but how to identify quality products, prepare meals and understand the importance of healthy eating to their overall health. Each ambassador was trained with the techniques to share these skills with 5-10 people in their communities and develop a pipeline of future Healthy You participants.