



1251 State Street | phone 972.907.3939
Richardson, TX 75082 | fax 972.907.3492
email : info@statefarm.com

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Dallas Chamber of Commerce
500 N. Akard Street
Suite 2600
Dallas, Texas 75201

Dear Dallas Chamber of Commerce:

Currently, Dallas contains approximately 40 food deserts. Food deserts can be defined as communities where at least one-third of the population lives more than one mile away from a large grocer (Cole, 2012). The average DFW resident probably has never realized this is an issue in our community. However, many of our citizens are affected by this problem. For example, Dallas mother Jaretha Robinson lives in a food desert, and the closest grocery store to her is a 48-minute bus ride away (Schechter, 2017). Not only are these food deserts an inconvenience, but they can lead to malnutrition for affected residents. A lack of proper nutrition can then escalate into other serious health issues. The rates of diet-related diseases have increased over time in these communities, and this can be linked to the lack of access to fresh food (Cole, 2012). Residents of food deserts resort to getting their food from convenience stores and fast food restaurants. These are places with notoriously unhealthy and processed foods, and this can be linked to the reason they suffer from so many health complications. State Farm is pleased to propose a plan to expand our "Live Well, Be Well" ideology, and support these affected communities within Dallas.

Background

State Farm helps people manage the risks of everyday life by providing benefits through programs that support a positive well-being (Live, 2017). Currently, the program helps improve our employees well-being through various different areas of focus such as weight management, stress management, and tobacco cessation programs. Employees choose which goal they would like to accomplish, and the company will help the individual set goals, and even provide a coach at the employee's request.

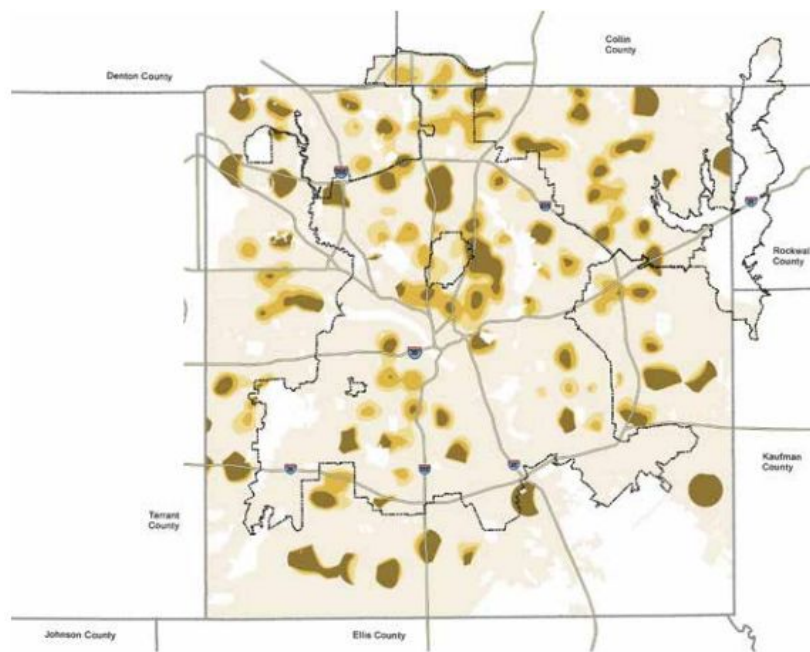
The particular issue in the community that State Farm would like to focus on is malnutrition. Statistics show that there are higher obesity rates due to malnutrition in lower economic areas. Texas ranks eighth out of the 50 states when it comes to obesity (State, 2017). Our proposed expansion program will focus solely on the education and provision of nutritional foods to those affected by food deserts in the Metroplex. State Farm wishes to go beyond ensuring the

wellbeing of our employees, but to doing the same for our community by combating the issues causing these problems.

Problem

Areas of South Dallas such as Jubilee Park, Oak Cliff, and Highland Hills are characterized as food deserts. The people in these areas suffer from a lack of access to nutrient dense foods such as fruits and vegetables. As a result, the primary places they get their nutrition from are corner stores and gas stations. *Figure 1* (Albert, 2015) below maps the number of chain grocery stores within a mile of each town, with most areas of southern Dallas having little to no major grocers nearby. This

poses to be a major issue, especially for civilians without vehicles.



Data: Texas Department of State Health Services, 2010–2011;
Trade Dimensions Retail Database, 2014;
US Census, American Community Survey, 2008–2012.

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

These food deserts exist because grocery stores do not want to invest in these particular neighborhoods for fear of not turning a profit due to the poverty amongst residents. Berg and Murdoch, established professors of Economics and Public Policy of UT Dallas, interviewed several top business executives, and another issue they had with building stores in food deserts areas was a fear of crime. Lower-income areas were removed from consideration due to the stereotypes of these poverty-stricken

neighborhoods. In the vast majority of cases it was done without any sort of cost-benefit analysis. In the same study, it was found that these affected communities are predominantly low income African Americans, which make up about 35% of neighborhoods without grocery stores within one mile (Berg & Murdoch 2007, p.20). Yolanda Weeks, one of many residents of Jubilee Park explained how “you gotta travel at least 10 miles to go to a decent grocery store” (Collins & Aesan, 2016, para.8). Some citizens have less access than others. For one person, the issue may be a long drive. However, for others without vehicles, it is a much longer hike.

This issue affects more people in our community than we may realize. For example, Mr. Blunt, a UTD shuttle driver and food desert resident, informed us of how he must drive miles to the Dallas Farmers Market for fresh produce. Most individuals are not able or willing to go far out of their way for produce. Also “when there is limited access to fresh food, people don’t eat it. Instead, they make due with what’s available” (Collins & Aesan, 2016, para.12). For the area's senior citizens and working parents who do not own vehicles, it is far easier to just walk to the local gas station.

Aforementioned access barriers, coupled with the fact that these areas have been without fresh produce for years, have had a negative effect on the communities’ diet. The food culture of these individuals has been influenced by their situation. The affected communities generally have less experience and are less comfortable preparing vegetables at home. This makes the unpalatable nature of these foods much harder to overcome and adds another hurdle on the road to healthier eating.

A study targeting food desert residents of Baltimore with a situation similar to South Dallas showed that these communities have a general distrust for food industry retailers. This is often due to high prices and a reduction in produce quality. They often opt for prepackaged meals. Overall the price of healthier foods is nearly twice as high as the price of unhealthy foods in low-income areas (Kern, 2017), adding another barrier to access. It is the finding of several studies that low-income neighborhoods are not only offered less access to wholesome produce but unfortunately they have “greater access to food sources that promote unhealthy eating” (Hilmers, 2012, para.2). Convenience stores are much smaller in size than the average grocery store, so they tend to stock their shelves with processed, non-perishable items. It is disturbing to know that for some individuals in our city, 7-Eleven and McDonald’s are the primary source of nutriment.

The effects that this phenomenon has on the community are alarming. These food deserts can be linked to an increase in obesity rates. Of Dallas County children, 49% are overweight or obese (Scott, 2016). Several sources including the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have independently attributed this rise in obesity to a higher consumption of calorie-dense, processed foods . The cost aspect of access, according to the Economic Research Service of the USDA (2017), is one of two major factors which is keeping obese-child households from eating better. The other issue being the unpalatable nature of healthy foods as discussed earlier. Not only is the consumption of unhealthy foods contributing to the obesity problem, but the lack of healthy food in residents’ diets does not help the issue. In these communities fruit and vegetable intake significantly correlates with grocery store availability. Kepper and Tseng, from the Pennington Biomedical Research Center, reported that an increase in “grocery store availability within 2-4 miles was also heavily correlated with fruit intake,” showing a strong link between the pervasiveness of fruit and vegetable intake in these environments and childhood preschool obesity (2016, para.9) . Other affected areas of health include an increase in disease, diabetes, and mortality rates in these communities. In hand with obesity, heart disease is also very prevalent in these communities. This accounts for 12% of deaths overall in the Dallas county, with disproportionately higher rates in the low-access areas

(Edwards, 2012). The impact of these deserts aren't merely unsightly or unfortunate, they are deadly. A study by The Food Trust, an organization dedicated to expanding access of food for children, found through mapping that many Dallas neighborhoods with poor access to fresh foods have a "high incidence of death from diet-related disease" (Albert, 2015, p.3). This is because the diets of these communities come from food of corner store shelves, the foods which stock these shelves are typically higher in simple carbohydrate and unhealthy fat content. The most recent data from the Texas Department of State Health Services showed that mortality related to diet-related factors per census tract in 2010-2011 was more than 10,000 deaths (Albert and Waldoks, 2015). The notion that food deserts are merely a minor phenomenon in our society are immensely false, and it's this kind of thinking that has kept these people without help for so long.

Another issue induced by malnutrition is the decrease in academic performance of the nearly 250,000 children in the affected areas (Wilonsky, 2017). Diets containing higher trans fats can negatively affect mental cognition (Ross, 2010, p.12). And a more recent parallel study in Europe seconds the fact that "nutrition affects brain development and cognitive functioning (Gage, et al., 2016)." Processed foods high in saturated and trans fats can have a negative effect on the children of the area, as they are set up for less than optimal learning conditions. Without a well-balanced diet full of fibrous carbohydrates and quality fats, a child's cognitive performance greatly suffers. The consequences can cause malnutrition to persist through generations, influencing cultural cuisines and sentiments about different foods and their implications on health.

It is clear that effects of this kind of malnutrition are extensive and devastating. Fortunately, there are two main components to our proposed solution for this issue. On one side, we would like to provide better access to healthful foods which seems to be the crux of issue. We would also like to educate individuals on how nutritious foods can be prepared and incorporated into the diet to help overcome some of the obstacles these individuals face with eating fresh produce.

Purpose

Fortunately, the Institute of Medicine and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention have come to the conclusion that "increasing the number of fresh food retail markets in lower-income neighborhoods would reduce the rate of obesity" (Albert, 2015, p.2). The outcomes of our proposed solutions can help make these food deserts flourish. Instituting (a) regular educational events and (b) fresh food drives (with the help of Get Healthy Dallas) will help alleviate the access issue and get residents of Jubilee Park comfortable with purchasing, preparing, and eating veggies and fruits. Creating an environment where our lower income citizens have the opportunity to live a healthier life and create better eating habits is our goal.

Proposal

Our Team proposes a project comprised of three major components: publicizing our program, hosting pop-up food shops, and a fundraising event. We will partner with Get Healthy Dallas to

expand our Live Well, Be Well ideology. Get Healthy Dallas is a research driven non-profit which strives to improve the health of its citizens through education and encouragement. They specifically focus on areas of South Dallas that are affected by limited access to fresh foods, and this is what drew us to them. As partners with similar goals for our community, we will come together to promote proper nutrition in lower income areas. Get Healthy Dallas will assist us in further educating our community about food deserts, and other previously discussed implications of these deserts. With financial assistance from the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, the pop-up shops will give residents in low-income areas access to fresh produce. Following this further, we would like to go more into detail about our three-part plan.

Part I: Program Promotion

To better promote our events and provide more information on our issue, we will develop an online website that will bring awareness to the food scarcity in South Dallas. We will also create a social media presence by marketing our outreach program on social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. Social media will be our main basis of marketing as it is an effective and low-cost way to advertise our cause. At our first two events (see part ii) there will be a brief survey that will take the participant roughly five minutes to complete. The survey will be available at the pop up shop for those who do not have access to internet. The data collected from the questionnaire will help us understand the local perspective, giving us the opportunity to know the daily challenges this community faces from an emotional and social standpoint. Based on the the food desert survey, we will create a “market of feeling” video.

Part II: Pop-up Shop

The pop-up shop will have wholesome food options such as organic fruits and vegetables. The shop will be located in Jubilee Park, right in the heart of the affected area. Volunteers will run the shop on a monthly basis starting in April. However, we hope to make our shop a weekly occurrence by next fall. Our shop will also provide educational brochures, which will give information on healthy food options, meal ideas, and local resources.

We will supply the food in the pop-up shop by hosting monthly food drives held at State Farm Corporate as well as local agent offices. We will encourage local farmers and grocers to donate produce that would otherwise be discarded. This act is referred to as gleaning (USDA, 2010). The USDA suggests several different ways of allocating resources to start a gleaning program in our area, and several options are available to us. In order to collect fresh produce to donate, we as volunteers for the company program can contact local farmers markets, and contact restaurants for their excess produce (2010). Currently, in America we support a throw away culture. Dr. Neff, a Johns Hopkins University researcher who led a first-ever study examining the nutrients we're tossing in the trash, states that “if we were able to recover all of the wasted food, we could provide a 2,000- calorie diet to 84% of the population” (Rossman, 2017, para.2). By developing a successful Live Well, Be Well outreach program it will not only impact those in low income areas, but it will also demonstrate how working together can make a community thrive.

Part III: Fundraising Event

The final component of our project will be a fundraising dinner, taking place on Sunday July 15th of next year. Guests will enjoy a catered meal and music at the event. There will also be a couple speakers who will share their personal stories of living in food deserts. We will invite State Farm employees as well as Dallas's elite class to this event. Money will be made from individual ticket sales as well as sponsorships. Our sponsors will receive a certain number of tickets to the event, depending on the level purchased, and will also get their name in our handouts. Beyond raising money that will benefit the cause we also hope this event will raise awareness for the issue. Our hope is that if enough attention is brought to the food deserts in Dallas, then more action will be taken to help properly feed suffering residents. The money raised by this event will be donated to Get Healthy Dallas, so that they can continue to create sources of fresh food for the affected areas. This event has the potential to raise \$42,000 (see budget section for breakdown) for our partner, and is something we hope will become an annual occurrence.

Schedule.

With the Dallas Chamber of Commerce's approval, the following schedule has been made for our Live Well Be Well expansion program.

PROPOSED 2018 SCHEDULE

March 25-31	Create online content and social media presence
April 15	First pop-up shop with survey
May 13	Second pop-up shop with survey
May 25	Release Market of feeling video
June 16	Pop-up shop
July 7	Pop-up shop
July 15	Fundraising event
August 11	Pop-up shop
August 18	Review turnout and revise existing plan if need be.

Staffing

State Farm's community wellness team consists of four members: Aida Tajahmadi, Janie Carreno, Jonathan Claycomb, and Rachel Liedtke. The team is made up of State Farm employees from various departments and was selected based on passion for our cause, as well as experiences related to aspects of our program. Each member will hold a position in order to carry out our plan.

Aida Tajahmadi will serve as our financial director. Ms. Tajahmadi earned a B.S. degree in accounting at the University of Texas at Dallas. Her expertise in financial matters, alongside her

passion for nutrition, will allow for the success of our program. As a bodybuilder, Ms. Tajahmadi greatly values nutrition and wants everyone to have equal access to wholesome foods.

Janie Carreno will serve as our public relations director and volunteer coordinator. Mrs. Carreno earned a degree in emerging media and communication at the University of Texas at Dallas. Mrs. Carreno will use her skills to promote our program within State Farm as well as to the public.

Jonathan Claycomb will serve as our food drive director. Mr. Claycomb served as event programmer for the Multicultural Center at the University of Texas at Dallas. His previous experience as an event planner, and his excellent organization skills make him more than qualified to hold this position. He is especially passionate about our cause because of personal connections to these communities.

Rachel Liedtke will serve as our fundraising event director. Ms. Liedtke has experience planning fundraising events through her sorority, Alpha Gamma Delta, at the University of Texas at Dallas. She is passionate about our cause due to previous work fighting food insecurity through the Alpha Gamma Delta Foundation.

In order for our food drives to run smoothly we will require volunteers. For each drive we will have approximately 15 volunteers, and our fundraising event will require roughly 30. Volunteer opportunities will be promoted to State Farm employees and students at the University of Texas at Dallas. Janie Carreno will be in charge of recruiting volunteers for both events. In the next section, we will refer to the different expenses we will incur for our program.

Budget

From a monetary standpoint, very little funds would need to be raised in order to get our program going. The creation of our website, as well as social media accounts will not incur any expenses. For our pop-up shops, we are simply asking farmers and restaurants to donate the foods they would typically throw out to feed those who do not have access to fresh produce otherwise. Farmers would appeal to the donation of their leftover produce as they can write it off on their taxes, and restaurants could use this opportunity to take advantage of publicity (Hesse 2016). State Farm will also allow staff to donate fresh food items as well. The only costs for the pop-up shops will be printing the flyers and brochures. Please refer to *Figure 2* for an itemized overview of expenses we will need in order to improve access.

FIGURE 2 - MARKETING MATERIAL EXPENSES

ITEM	COST PER UNIT	QUANTITY	COST
Large Banner (used at fundraising)	\$79.54	1	\$79.54

event)			("Vistaprint", 2017)
5.5" x 8.5" Flyers (will promote events and provide contact info)	\$.14	500	\$70.86 ("Vistaprint", 2017)
8.5" x 11" Tri-Fold Brochures (will provide educational material regarding nutrition)	\$.36	250	\$89.99 ("Vistaprint", 2017)
TOTAL	---	---	\$240.39

The third part of the plan, the fundraising event, will incur the most expenses. We will host the

Fundraising Event Expenses	
Expenses	
Venue	\$5,000
Catering @ \$30/guest	\$9,390
Gratuity @ 20%	\$1,878
Event Decorations	\$200
Entertainment	\$500
Total	\$16,968
Estimated # of Attendees	300
Estimated Cost Per Person	\$57

Fundraising Concept			
Sponsorship Levels	Price	ESTIMATED # of Units Sold	Price x Estimated Units Sold
Level 1 (10 Tickets)	\$5,000	2	\$10,000
Level 2 (7 Tickets)	\$2,500	6	\$15,000
Level 3 (4 Tickets)	\$1,000	9	\$9,000
Single Ticket	\$100	250	\$25,000
		ESTIMATED Total Funds Raised	\$59,000

Figure 3

event at Sixty Five Hundred in Dallas during July, which is considered a slow season, and on a Sunday to get the lowest rate. Other expenses for the event include catering, decorations and entertainment. Details of the costs can be seen in *Figure 3*. All expenses will be covered in the funds raised. *Figure 3* also includes

details about how much money we expect to raise through sponsorships and individual ticket sales. After subtracting the expense we predict we will be able to raise \$42,000 for our cause.

An agreement to our proposal would be an agreement to help out with the costs of the fundraising event. We are confident that we have come up with a reasonable budget, which will successfully execute our plan and be cost efficient.

Conclusion and Authorization

As you can see, food deserts are a very prevalent and problematic issue in our area. The effects have often systemic, inequitable, and morbid outcomes. They are a major issue in Dallas. It is evident with their effect on mortality, and disease, that in many cases, it is a matter of life and death. We hope to gain your support in our plan for stopping food waste, and feeding the many families affected by food deserts. Through gleaning, we can allocate produce, which is wasted in the metroplex, and give it to families in need instead of throwing it away. By partnering with Get Healthy Dallas we can work toward long-term solutions. The \$42,000 we can raise at our fundraising event will go towards allocating viable sources of fresh fruits and vegetables in Dallas's food deserts. Convenience stores and fast food chains are places an individual should go to when in a time crunch, they should not be a citizens only option for food.

If we can give those in low-income communities a way to access healthier foods, we can create a better outcome. Our team feels very strongly that we will be able to significantly impact the lives of many families through our program, and with your help we can do just that. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

State Farm's Community Wellness Team:

Janie Carreno

Jonathan Claycomb

Rachel Liedtke

Aida Tajahmadi

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