Culinary Foundations for Health

Early Findings From a Novel Apartment-Based Program

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UT Southwestern Medical Center

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Purpose

The objective of this program is to evaluate a public-private partnership between an academic culinary medicine program and a private equity real estate firm. Specifically, the initiative seeks to assess three key factors:

Feasibility	Interest	Perceptions
Ability of medical student trainees to delivery culinary education to residents of a diverse, mixed-income residential property	Interest, engagement, barriers to participation, and preferences for residential-based health programming	Perceptions of community-based health education delivered by trainees among residents of a mixed-income property

Implementation

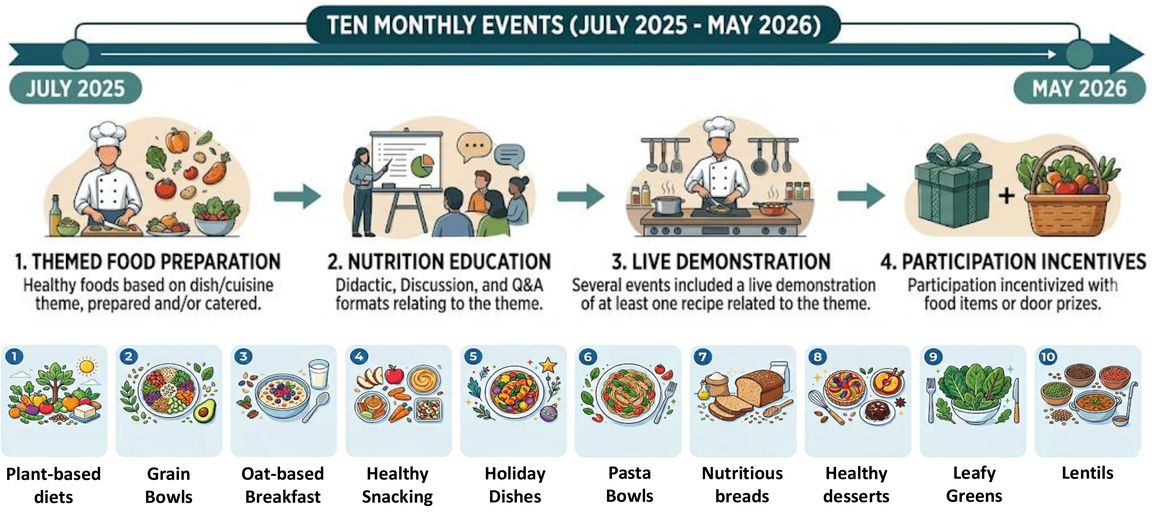
Site: The program takes place at a mixed-income apartment complex with approximately 500 residents owned by a local private equity real estate firm, CAF Funds, in Dallas, Texas.

Participants:

- Two live-in UT Southwestern medical students design and implement monthly events at the property
- CAF Funds provides $900 each month to support health programming
- UT Southwestern Culinary Medicine faculty and staff provide training in culinary medicine principles

Programming:

- *Topics:* Each event centered on a theme related to a specific dish, cuisine, or eating pattern, for which a variety of healthy foods were prepared and/or catered.
- *Format:* Participants received nutrition education relating to the theme in didactic, discussion-based, and question-and-answer formats, all of which included interactive activities that assessed nutrition knowledge and rewarded participation with food items or door prizes. Each event included a live demonstration of at least one recipe related to the theme.



Outcome measures		
Interest and Engagement	**Feasibility**	**Resident perceptions**
• Number of events	• Cost	• Motivations to attend
• Interest (RSVPs)	• Implementation time	• Barriers to participation
• Attendance	• Trainee efficacy	• Preferences for events

Results

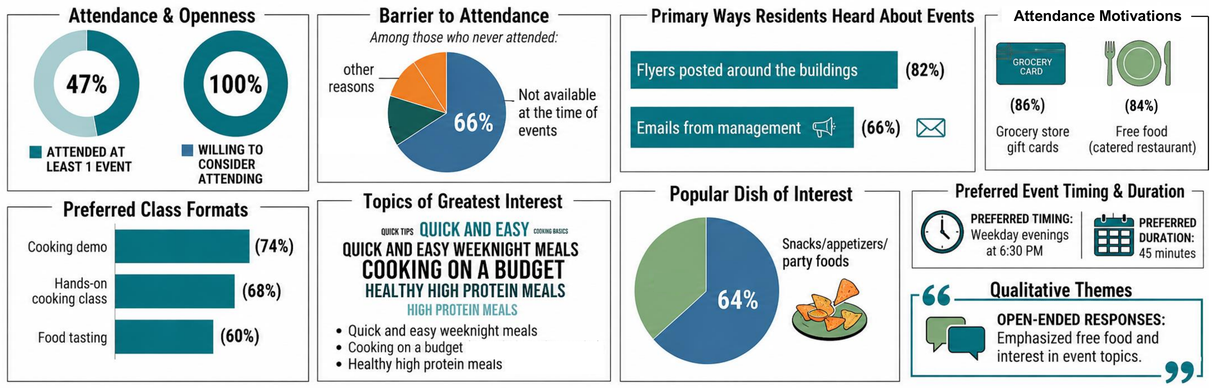
Interest and Attendance:

Total RSVPs and attendance across all events were 249 and 176, respectively, with 127 unique RSVPs and 82 unique attendees.

Funding Utilization:

On average, $888 (99%) of the $900 allotted for each event was used on food, supplies, grocery giveaways, door prizes, survey completion, or attendance and engagement incentives.

Resident perceptions among survey respondents (N = 45)



Conclusion

- **Housing as a Health Platform:** Successful implementation of ten monthly events with significant resident interest and engagement suggests that residential housing, combined with academic partnerships and trainee-led delivery, can serve as a platform for delivering community health interventions.
- **Engagement:** Survey responses emphasized the importance of incentives such as grocery gift cards and nutritious catered meals for driving ongoing engagement and attendee satisfaction.

Next steps:

To maximize impact and sustainability, future programming should address logistical barriers by prioritizing short, frequent weekday evening sessions focused on budget-friendly, time-efficient meal preparation.

Disclosures

This program is supported by CAF Funds, which owns and manages the property. The medical student team members received waived rent at the property for the duration of the program in addition to monthly funding for events through CAF Funds.