

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Rick Scott**  
Governor

**John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS**  
State Surgeon General & Secretary

**Vision:** To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County

**Media Contact:** Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058;  
[DOHSarasotaNews@FLHealth.gov](mailto:DOHSarasotaNews@FLHealth.gov)

October 24, 2014



## Community Health Action Teams work on food access issues on National Food Day

*Promoting access to fresh, affordable and healthy foods*



SARASOTA COUNTY– Community Health Action Teams (CHATs) from across Sarasota County met today, Friday, Oct. 24 as part of the National Food Day observance to consider ways to help area residents in accessing fresh, affordable and healthy foods.

The increasing rates of obesity and obesity-related complications in the U.S. are partly due to lack of access to nutrient-dense foods such as fruits and vegetables. Today's Food Day event consisted of two roundtable discussions which explored "best practice" models from other communities that could be adopted locally.

Nationwide, 49 million people (15.9 million are children) live in 'food insecure' households – not knowing where their next meal is coming from or the quality of that meal. Sarasota County is not immune to the issue of food insecurity. Access to healthy foods is a serious problem especially for low-income minorities who live in 'food deserts' – communities with limited access to affordable and nutritious foods. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Access Atlas, there are currently nine food deserts in Sarasota County. Food desert clusters within the county are primarily located in north Sarasota and North Port. As a result of certain populations living in food deserts, 1 in 4 children in the county are unsure about where their next meal will come from or the quality of their food.

Adults who reside in communities inundated with convenience stores and fast food restaurants are less likely to eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables and have higher rates of obesity compared to adults with access to supermarkets. In fact, health surveys show that fewer than 10 percent of Sarasota adults eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables.

-more-

“I believe that we made some significant inroads today in exploring the issues and opportunities facing our residents throughout the county and looking forward to the work continuing through the CHATs on long-term plans to address this public health concern,” says Pascale Edouard, Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) Health Educator Consultant.

“The local Food Day Forum was effective in bringing awareness to the issues that contribute to food insecurity and inspired our community to proactively address local issues that limit accessibility to healthy food options,” adds Edouard.

Collaborating partners in this event include All Faiths Food Bank, UF/IFAS County Extension, Transition Sarasota, and the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota).

Established in 2002, the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) is the coordinating entity for the CHATs who work at the grass-roots level to improve the health of Sarasota County residents.

[Click Here](#) to learn about local Food Day 2014 events.

Learn more by visiting the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) website: [www.CHIP4Health.org](http://www.CHIP4Health.org) or call Pascale Edouard at 941-861-2779 or Beth Kregenow at 941-861-2867.

For information on Healthiest Weight Florida, visit <http://www.healthiestweightflorida.com/children.html>. Follow the initiative on Twitter: ***#HealthiestWeightFL***