



NEWS RELEASE: November 28, 2018

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‘I Choose’ program teaches Mt. Clemens teens habits to prevent chronic diseases

Clinton Township, Michigan— Major lifestyle changes begin with small steps.

At Mt. Clemens Community Schools, a program launches today to help teens learn how to make healthy lifestyle choices so as to avoid chronic diseases like tooth decay, obesity and Type 2 diabetes later in life.

The initiative is called “I Choose,” and it’s a partnership with the [Greater Detroit Area Health Council \(GDAHC\)](#), [Henry Ford Macomb Hospital \(HFMH\)](#), the [Michigan Health Endowment Fund](#) and the [Delta Dental Foundation](#).

The program is based on the [Diabetes Prevention Program \(DPP\)](#) for adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The partners worked together to fund the program and the team of nurses and community dietician at HFMH School and Community Wellness developed a youth friendly curriculum.

“Diabetes is a growing medical concern in the U.S. and this program provides a pathway to diabetes prevention by teaching children to make healthier lifestyle and nutrition choices,” said Lisa Braddix, GDAHC Director, Population Health and Health Equity. “Aligned with GDAHC’s focus on addressing the social determinants of health, this program is a game changer that will drive long-term positive health outcomes.”

The DPP model is currently used with adults, and has drastically changed behavior. Participants received counseling and support on diet, exercise and lifestyle, and reduced their risk of developing diabetes on average by 58 percent.

Partners think they will see just as encouraging results with the Mt. Clemens students, where about one third of families have a high prevalence of poor health outcomes.

A lifestyle coach specially trained in both diabetes prevention and working with youth will lead the program. “We want to empower them to problem solve, overcome challenges and make these changes in their life,” said Jill Yore, Manager of School and Community Wellness at HFMH.

Over the school year, students will meet weekly for 16 core sessions to learn about nutrition, stress reduction, behavior modification, good oral health and the benefits of physical activity.

Robyn Ross, a student, said she is enrolled because she wanted to try something new. “I want to focus on my future. I enjoyed the exercises in the first class, and look forward to more physical activity in future classes.”

The second phase of the program, which runs April to September, is designed to reinforce the classroom-based curriculum through hands-on experiences including visits to local farmers’ markets, cooking demonstrations, biking, hiking and hearing from motivational speakers.

“We are very proud to support this groundbreaking pilot program,” said Teri Battaglieri, Executive Director of the Delta Dental Foundation. “The program’s focus on making healthy lifestyle choices will go a long way to ensuring better health outcomes for the students who participate.”

For more information or questions about future enrollment, contact Jill Yore, jyore1@hfhs.org.