



Empowering People to Truly Live Well Using Plant-Based Meals

On June 7th, the 10-day Pittsburgh Community Oasis Jumpstart Pilot was launched by the nonprofit, Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture (TLW), in Atlanta, Georgia. Twelve people completed the program. The Oasis Jumpstart Pilot Program was created by PlantPure Communities (PPC), a nonprofit organization, with the goal of empowering millions of people to take control and responsibility for their wellness. Through the Oasis Program, PPC is partnering with local groups like Truly Living Well to bring healthy food and science-based nutrition education to underserved neighborhoods across the country. The Pittsburgh Oasis Jumpstart is the first of five Pilots which are either complete or underway in other under-served neighborhoods in Rhode Island, California, Tennessee, and Arizona.



The Pittsburgh community was chosen for the Oasis Pilot Program because of its interest in healthy food alternatives. Established by African Americans in 1883, on 554 acres in the aftermath of the Civil War in a segregated city, Pittsburgh is one of Atlanta's oldest neighborhoods. The railroad played a defining role in the development of Pittsburgh and the neighborhood's earliest residents were laborers on the railroads. The neighborhood got its name because the land south of the Pegram Railroad repair yards was so polluted it was nicknamed "Pittsburgh," after the steel mills in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh is a USDA-designated food desert with a poverty rate that is roughly double that of Fulton County.

TLW and its AmeriCorps VISTA's program to improve food security have worked in the community for two years. The organization, which manages a food co-op with local residents, saw PPC as a great partner for introducing a plant based lifestyle. TLW is a nonprofit organization committed to "growing food, growing people, and growing community." Since 2006, TLW has engaged in local food production, urban ag education, training and outreach. The Oasis Pilot Program provided a source for nutrition education, plant based food, and a support group of like-minded people.



"The program really helped the participants and their families change the way they look at food. They're choosing healthier options including more vegetables and fruits. People who have been eating a meat based diet for up to 50 years are now shifting their diet," noted Ashley Jones, AmeriCorps VISTA Food Co-op Coordinator. On the first day of the Jumpstart, Emily Holland noted that she'd like to learn what she can do

to improve or heal her condition rather than just manage the symptoms. "I'm getting married soon and I'd like to start my journey with my fiancé in the healthiest way possible. I really want us to do this together so I'm hoping he will join me and we can support one another."

The focus of Oasis is both short-term benefits and long-term lasting change. Biomarker data was collected for participants before and after the Jumpstart so that each person could experience first-hand the powerful impact of nutrition on their health. On the last day of the Jumpstart, William Southwood, Emily's fiancé, was extremely grateful for the Program. "This was special because 10 days ago, I was coming to support Emily. Now, I have a new understanding our how our health, as humans, could have been so much better if we were eating plant-based! I had no idea plant-based food could taste so good!"



The Oasis Program offers participants the opportunity to learn about the benefits of a plant-based diet, while enabling them to experience firsthand the powerful health impacts. The Oasis Pilots are modeled on the Jumpstarts conducted in Mebane, North Carolina, that were documented in the 2015 *PlantPure Nation* film. As part of the program, participants eat whole food, plant-based (WFPB) meals for the jumpstart period of 10 days. Lunch and Dinner entrees typically consisted of plant-based Kitchen Starter meals provided by PlantPure, Inc.

“Food-borne chronic disease in underserved neighborhoods is a fixable problem with science based nutrition education, delicious plant-based recipes and meals, and hands on learning,” said Jody Kass, executive director of PlantPure Communities. Nelson Campbell, founder of PPC, and creator of the vision for the Oasis Program said, “Our goal is to make sure everyone has access to healthy food and nutrition education, regardless of their background, location or socioeconomic status.”



The biomarker testing offered through Oasis provided a baseline for participants so they were able to see first-hand the powerful effects of a plant-based diet. Many of the participants expressed a desire for the program because of personal struggles with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity.

During the 10 days, participants also received nutrition education from Dr. Jennifer Rooke, Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine at the Morehouse School of Medicine. Dr. Rooke talked to participants about the prevalence and dangers of oxidized cholesterol and noted, “Atherosclerosis, commonly known as clogged arteries, is the most common disease and cause of death on Earth. It is the most common underlying cause of a wide range of health outcomes that include high blood pressure, erectile dysfunction, and heart attacks. If we don’t get



clarity about this disease and control it, millions of people will continue to suffer and die each year from an entirely preventable disease. Atherosclerosis can be reversed by eliminating cholesterol-containing foods from the diet. We know this with certainty because we have pictures of plaque regression on oil-free, plant-based diets.”

Dr. Rooke has been practicing medicine for over 28 years and is very interested in the connection between lifestyle and disease. She holds a certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition from the Center for Nutrition Studies/eCornell and is board certified in Public Health/Preventive Medicine and Occupational Medicine.

By the end of the program, participants of the Pittsburgh Oasis Pilot saw significant, positive changes. Several participants lost between 6 and 9 pounds and saw up to 5 inches disappear from their waistlines. In addition, many participants experienced the following health improvements:

- Up to 30-point decreases in blood pressure
- Up to 68-point decreases in total cholesterol
- Up to 61-point decreases in LDL (“bad” cholesterol)
- Up to 175-point decreases in triglycerides

Carol Hunter, TLW Chief Administrative Officer, is grateful for the support of PPC in making the Oasis Program a reality in the Pittsburgh community. “This partnership exemplified the power of people coming together to make a change and enabled a broad range of resources and expertise to provide a benefit for our community.”

For information about the PPC Oasis Program, contact PPC at info@plantpurecommunities.org and visit PPC’s website: <http://plantpurecommunities.org/programs/>.