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OASIS SUCCESS STORIES

CREATING AN OASIS IN THE MOJAVE DESERT

In mid-October 2017, **Mojave Desert Nutrition and Lifestyle Science Initiative (MDNI)**, a nonprofit organization and group that is part of the PlantPure Communities Pod Network, launched the 10-day Bullhead City Oasis Jumpstart Pilot. Over thirty people registered to participate in the Oasis Jumpstart Pilot, filling every available space within one week of enrollment commencement!

The nonprofit PlantPure Communities (PPC) created the Oasis Jumpstart Pilot Program motivated by the goal of empowering people to take control of their health. Through the Oasis Program, PPC partners with local groups to bring healthy food and science-based nutrition education to underserved neighborhoods across the country. The Oasis Jumpstart Pilots are modeled on the “Jumpstarts” conducted in Mebane, North Carolina, and documented in the 2015 PlantPure Nation film. Bullhead City Oasis Jumpstart participants were provided with whole food, plant-based meals to consume for a period of 10 days. Biomarker data was collected before and after the jumpstart period so participants could see first-hand the powerful impact that this diet change has on their bodies while simultaneously learning about the benefits of a plant-based diet.

The nonprofit MDNI’s mission is to create true health awareness and nutrition education through cutting-edge, evidence-based nutritional considerations and to debunk nutritional myths, and present a clear view on optimal health. MDNI was one of the first groups to join the PlantPure Communities Pod Network, which is comprised of over 450 independent local groups (also known as ‘Pods’) and people who promote the benefits of a whole foods, plant-based lifestyle. Betty Rae and Dan Miller, the founders of MDNI, were inspired by their personal health journeys to bring the health message of plant-based food and nutrition to their community. Today, MDNI has a total following of over 10,000 people on their social media accounts!

“Mohave County and the local community leads the state of Arizona in obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. They also lead the state in prescribed medications for chronic disease and senior residents on a fixed income, and are third in the state for those living in a food desert with a 38% rate of food insecurity and 27% childhood poverty,” said Betty Rae, explaining the motivation to carry out the Oasis Jumpstart Pilot.

MDNI led the Oasis Jumpstart Pilot with the support of several other organizations. The Bullhead City Senior Nutrition Center donated the space for the pre- and post-Jumpstart events and also stored a portion of the frozen meals. The Caring Hearts Food Bank Ministry Inc. and Country Health Market stored all the meals until they were transported to the Senior Nutrition Center to be handed out to participants. In addition, Country Health Market gave MDNI permission to “pull” products for breakfast/snacks to display to the participants, and donated snacks for the pre-Jumpstart event. Caring Hearts also covered the cost for several low-income participants and provided bottled water, snacks, and fruit. Bullhead Urgent Care’s Dr. Don Wagner and MDNI played a support role taking additional biometrics.





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A pre-Jumpstart event kicked off the Pilot, during which participants received nutrition education information, had their first round of biomarker testing, and received the Jumpstart meals. This testing provided a baseline for participants to gauge the effects of a plant-based diet.

Many of the participants expressed a desire to participate in the program because of personal health struggles, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and digestive problems.

Maria, 34, said she chose to participate because “I am a diabetic, overweight and have high blood pressure. I am very skeptical of weight loss programs and thought I would try this plant-based program based on my doctor’s recommendation. I am Mexican and I eat a lot of fatty foods, so because it was only 10 days it gave me an opportunity to try the food. After the 10 days, I found out that I could eat breakfast, lunch, dinner, dessert, and snacks and still add a lot of vegetables, beans, and rice. I felt satisfied and lost 3 inches around my waist and controlled my blood sugar to a normal range the entire time...the sugars reduced overall from 206 down to under 100.”

Over the course of the Pilot, doctors and educators taught participants how to shop in a grocery store, prepare simple, nutritious meals, and understand the science behind why this lifestyle is optimal for long-term health.

By the end of the program, participants saw significant positive changes. Many experienced large reductions in their cholesterol and blood pressure numbers. In addition, most were able to lose weight, while symptoms like fatigue, irritability, and constipation were also diminished or eliminated.

Mary, at 62 years old, was curious if she could eat only plants for 10 days. She remarked, “WOW, I got some great results, I cannot believe it! I got some really fantastic results! I raised my HDL and lowered my total cholesterol and lost inches from my waist, which was surprising. I am doing a happy dance I feel so fantastic. I am expanding my garden and plan to continue eating this way.”

Jeni, a 58-year-old executive church administrator, and her husband, Deacon Jerry, wanted to see what a difference 10 days could make to jumpstart them back into a healthy eating lifestyle. “We had tried the plant-based Daniel Fast before but were curious about this Oasis program. Our friends were doing it and it gave us an opportunity to immerse ourselves with healthier food and lifestyle choices. I personally experienced a lot of changes during the jumpstart and the biometrics reflected those changes. Not only did I feel more energy, but I lost weight, 4-1/2 inches from my waist and we each dropped over 20 points in our cholesterol. It was amazing!”





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She continued, "... my husband exclaimed how delicious the new vegetable dishes were, particularly because he would not have eaten them before. It is amazing how quickly what you eat affects your health. I will be a lot more conscientious about what I prepare and what we eat in the future and will have continued confidence to try new plant-based recipes and strive to be primarily plant-based. It is just not natural to eat meat everyday - all day. When you realize what meat-eating does to your health, and how good you can feel by not doing a meat-centric diet... and see these numbers change so dramatically when eating plant-based. It will be our way of life from this point forward. We are getting older but this program has shown us it is not too late to make significant health changes by eating plant-based. I thank Betty and Dan and PlantPure Communities for allowing this program into our community."

At the end of the program, MDNI hosted a Graduation Potluck meal for all the participants and handed out Certificates of Completion.

"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," pointed out Jody Kass, executive director of PlantPure Communities. Nelson Campbell, founder of PPC, and creator of the vision for the Oasis Program added, "Our goal is to make sure everyone has access to healthy food and nutrition education, regardless of their background, location, or socioeconomic status."

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

