

GHWIC Success Story

Norton Sound Health Corporation: Increase physical activity access & participation by building community

A look at a new fitness program developed in Nome, Alaska!

Through a variety of health and wellness outreach opportunities, the Norton Sound Health Corporation Health Educators identified that community members struggled to find enjoyable and affordable exercise options.

Using funds from the GHWIC grant, we launched a group fitness program to increase access to and build community around physical activity. We worked with Community Partners such as local schools, employers and the city to increase the amount of locations where physical activity could take place, and trained multiple individuals from the community to become certified group fitness instructors.

Through empowering and instilling these skills in our instructors and our community members we have seen a significant increase in the participation in group classes in our community. By continuing to engage others in the program we are able to build community around physical activity that will leave a lasting impact beyond funding.

In Alaska in 2019, 25.6% of adults met the aerobic and muscle strengthening guidelines set by the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). To meet these guidelines, one would need at least:

- **150 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity**
- **75 minutes per week of vigorous intensity activity**
- **Or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity totaling at least 150 minutes per week**

While there are opportunities for physical exercise in Nome, barriers unique to our community have the ability to prevent people from participating in their favorite activities. Poor weather and icy or flooded roads can make outdoor recreation and subsistence activities unsafe. The Nome Recreation Center costs money. The current fitness classes that are available have fees. Sports leagues are available seasonally but cost money. And some people may not know how to use the equipment in the gym and find it intimidating.

In September of 2021, we began by simultaneously training group fitness instructors that were selected through an application process, and working with community partners to find available locations to host classes at no cost of participants. Our team worked with the Nome Recreation Center, schools and local employers including the hospital to outfit and convert existing spaces into safe places for exercise in various places in town. Trained instructors receive their training for free with an agreement to teach 48 classes in the calendar year.



We utilized our legal team to develop agreements with instructors and a liability waiver sign-in sheet for classes. We worked with our PR department to develop advertisements and share them widely in the community. We distribute a monthly calendar for the community so that individuals can learn more about our classes and find times to participate.

We used our sign-in sheets to collect data on participation. Our results show an increase in participation over time. During first quarter, we had 30 encounters. During the second quarter there were 60. And finally, during the third quarter, we had 198 encounters.

We also track the number of individuals who attend classes, which are becoming more popular and reaching new people each quarter. Camp always focuses on sustainability of our successful programs. We hope to expand the number of instructors in our program and continue to build on our community. When funding runs out, the certifications of the instructors, and the community of participants built, will remain. We are continuing to work with the Nome Recreation Center and other entities to continue group fitness opportunities beyond the life of this grant.