



GHWIC Success Story

Native Americans for Community Action: Honor Your Heart Program

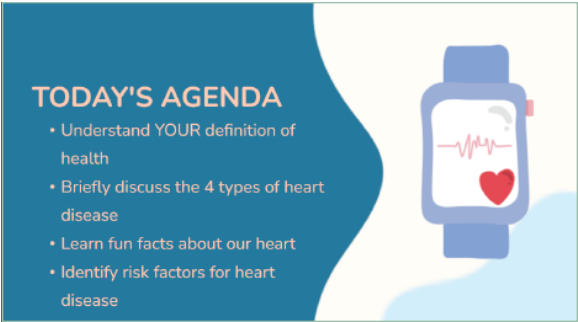
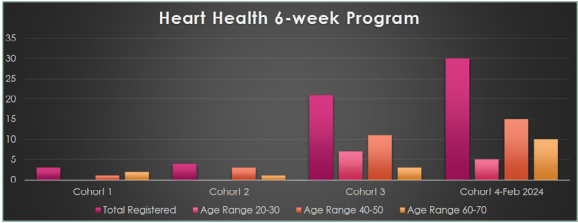
The Native Americans for Community Action (NACA), a non-profit Urban Indian Center located in Flagstaff, Arizona, was founded to provide support to American Indians away from their homelands. Today, NACA serves as a vital hub for healthcare and community support, helping individuals from over 10 federally recognized Native American tribes in Northern Arizona, including the Hopi, Navajo, Havasupai, San Juan Southern Paiute, Kaibab Paiute, Hualapai, Fort Mojave, Yavapai Apache, Yavapai Prescott, Tonto Apache, and White Mountain Apache tribes. NACA not only offers essential services but also fosters a sense of connection and belonging through cultural education and traditional practices.

One of NACA’s notable initiatives is the “Honor Your Heart” program, a 6-week virtual class designed to provide practical tools for heart health and balanced living. Typically attended by around 10 participants per session, the program emphasizes intrinsic motivation, connecting health to personal values, emotional well-being, and a positive relationship with food and body. It also employs motivational interviewing techniques to support participants.

“Honor Your Heart” focuses on making heart health approachable and relevant to the community. By using neutral language, NACA aims to create a non-intimidating environment where individuals feel encouraged to participate. The program avoids inducing shame, fostering curiosity instead, and promotes support among participants and instructors. It centers on personal values and the participants’ definitions of health, incorporating the social determinants of health to create sustainable, lifelong habits.

Recognizing that many participants may feel overwhelmed by a new diagnosis, NACA emphasizes providing information rather than strict rules. Participants are encouraged to take what they need from the class and apply it to their lives in a way that works for them.

Early evaluations were key to the program’s success. By examining when participants dropped out and listening to their feedback, NACA identified areas for improvement. This led to a greater emphasis on support, discussions, and sustainable long-term practices. They noted that some participants were initially hesitant or felt isolated, which prompted the integration of more community-building activities within the program. This approach not only helped retain participants but also enriched their experience by fostering a sense of belonging.



The enhanced focus on support has been instrumental in helping participants build relationships and a network of support. By sharing their backgrounds and experiences, participants uplift each other and develop a strong sense of community. Motivational interviewing further enhances this support system, fostering intrinsic motivation among participants. This technique allows participants to explore their own reasons for change, making their health journey more personal and meaningful.

The classes are discussion-based, allowing participants to define health in their own terms. They are frequently asked questions like “What does this mean to you?” and “What does health/fitness/support mean to you?”, facilitating a personalized approach to health. These open-ended questions encourage participants to reflect on their values and experiences, making the content more relatable and applicable to their daily lives.

Finally, the program emphasizes sustainable long-term habits rather than fad diets. It addresses barriers to exercise, encourages curiosity, and focuses on personal values and a healthy mindset. Participants are guided to set realistic goals and develop strategies that fit their lifestyles, ensuring that the changes they make are both manageable and enduring. This comprehensive approach helps participants to overcome obstacles and maintain their progress over time.

By continuously evaluating and responding to participant needs, NACA has successfully enhanced the “Honor Your Heart” program. This has led to increased engagement and enrollment, helping more people achieve their health goals.



MINDSET MATTERS

- 1 You are capable of managing your health. You can use nutrition as part of your management plan without having to overhaul your diet and have strict food rules.
- 2 Tune into your thoughts. What are you saying to yourself when you eat, grocery shop, or prepare a meal. Does it have a negative tone? Challenge it.
- 3 There are no “good” or “bad” foods. There are foods that are more nourishing than others, but there’s room for all food to fit into your diet. The goal is balance, variety, and moderation. Remember these keywords.

ACTIVITY: WHEN YOU THINK OF NUTRITION WHAT FEELINGS COME TO MIND?

NOURISHMENT

Eating consistently and adequately.

Tips:

- Practice eating at least 3 meals a day and 2 snacks a day
- Avoid going over 3 hours without eating
- Are your meals balanced? (Think back to our nutrition lessons)
- Are you listening to your body?