

## ***CHUCK WOMEN PADDLE THE CANOE TOGETHER TO PROMOTE HEALTH***

*Local community women teach and act for diabetes prevention through healthy lifestyle*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Chuuk, one the four Federated States of Micronesia, has many lifestyle-related health problems, such as diabetes.
- Because many of the island communities are isolated and can be reached only by plane or ship, public health capacity to reach communities with health messages is very limited.

### **Program**

- The Chuuk Women's Council is a community-based organization with about forty active groups of diverse women working within island communities.
- In partnership with the Federated States of Micronesia Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, the Council extends health promotion and diabetes prevention efforts across the main island, the remote lagoon islands, and the outer islands.
- Council members attend diabetes workshops on preparing healthy meals using local foods, increasing physical activity, diabetes management and prevention. The training increases awareness, helping to remind women and their families and friends to be screened for diabetes and hypertension and to take preventive steps. The women also receive training in effective ways to promote health by tailoring health messages to fit the community environment, language, culture, and social customs which is critical for understanding and acceptance by people living in the community.

### **Impact**

The teamwork of the Chuuk Women's Council with public health professionals helps increase resources for health promotion and diabetes prevention as follows:

- Council members launched education sessions for primary schools on healthy lifestyles and organized community diabetes seminars in separate sessions for women and men according to cultural custom that allows participants to talk freely with one another.
- Learning of the danger to people with diabetes of cuts to their feet the Council worked to clear village footpaths and maintain them free of objects that cause injury.
- The Council and the diabetes program coordinator distributed diabetes education materials translated into native languages and sponsored family fun walks with over 120 participants.
- Membership is growing about ten percent every year indicating a real interest in better health.
- The Chuuk Women's Council health chair says, "...it's truly serving local women. We are paddling the canoe together in living healthier lives and making better choices. Local public health programs cannot do it alone."

### **Contact**

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