



## ASTHO Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Learning Collaborative *Spotlight on National Partners*

### Counter Cholesterol Rallies Austin Around Cholesterol Risk Awareness and Education

Written by the National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention

The National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention's [Counter Cholesterol](#) initiative is a bilingual messaging and communications campaign designed to raise awareness about cholesterol risk among mothers between the ages of 35 and 54 so they can be around for the people they love most. Mothers within this age range are likely to have strong and active roles in both the lives of their children and parents. Counter Cholesterol's call to action is for mothers to think about what would happen to their loved ones if they weren't around and to speak to a healthcare provider about their cholesterol risks.

To lay the groundwork for the campaign, the National Forum piloted a six month, evidence-based project aimed at diverse demographic groups in Austin, TX where 163,000 women aged 35-54 reside. Among this group, 87.8 percent had their cholesterol checked within the past five years and 38.7 percent had high cholesterol. Austin was selected because women in the target population fall short on treatment adherence and understanding perceived risks of high cholesterol, despite their high screening rates.

The National Forum collaborated with the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services department (Austin Public Health) and involved many community partners to reach a diverse target audience. These partners included the Austin YMCA, Foundation Communities (a provider of affordable housing and support services), Central Health (a local public entity that provides access to high-quality care and works to eliminate health disparities), El Buen Samaritano (an Episcopalian health outreach ministry), and the University of Texas at Austin's College of Pharmacy.

The campaign strategy included developing a website, video clips, social media posts, events, and a cholesterol awareness partner toolkit. Local partners leveraged these communications tools by incorporating them into emails, newsletters, web announcements, and at community events, such as Family Day at the North Austin YMCA, health fairs and school sponsored events with Austin Public Health's diabetes coalition, a presentation at the Mended Hearts Regional Conference, and a community stakeholders meeting hosted by Austin Public Health.

During the pilot, the National Forum and Austin Public Health tested five messaging concepts by measuring engagement received via Facebook likes and post interactions (e.g., commenting or sharing a



post) and website clicks. Facebook posts (English and Spanish) were paid, promoted posts targeted to both working and stay-at-home moms aged 34-54 who had kids of any age, as well as grandparents, caregivers, family households, baby boomers, generation Xers, people interested in nutrition, fitness, and wellness, and people with family incomes ranging from \$30,000-\$150,000. The campaign performed well within its target demographics and showed positive engagement results.

Counter Cholesterol's success wouldn't have been possible without the commitment of local partners and their willingness to collaborate not only with the National Forum, but with other local organizations. One of the biggest outcomes from the Austin pilot was the development cholesterol training course for community health workers, which is currently underway. Community health workers (CHWs) in Austin are some of the most powerful messengers of health education among low-income and minority communities. Our partners loved how informative and visually appealing the communications tools were, especially the website. Almost right away, adapting the tools for CHWs seemed like an obvious next step, leading to idea for the training course.

As the pilot came to a close, it offered a promising new model for delivering health education. The campaign sparked discussion about how community organizations can come together to deliver more unified messages on cardiovascular disease prevention. Many of the National Forum's partners have strategized how to increase hypertension and diabetes control by adding cholesterol risk to the conversation. The Counter Cholesterol campaign can help close the gap on cholesterol awareness and be expanded to related topics, such as hypertension.

**Learn more about the National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention:**

[www.hearthealthystrokefree.org](http://www.hearthealthystrokefree.org)