

Diabetes: A Family Matter Community Theatre

Brief Description:

The purpose of this activity is to serve as an awareness and fund-raising event for your *Diabetes: A Family Matter* program or for your local diabetes coalition. By inviting local actors and using community theatre, the three short *SUGAR Plays* can be enacted locally. Each play provides a different perspective about living with diabetes in the Appalachian and provides an entertaining way to get some important health messages across to others.

Objectives:

The purpose of this activity is to provide a unique way that community people can be engaged in messages about healthy lifestyles and diabetes prevention. This event could also serve as a way to raise money locally for your diabetes program.

Participants:

For this activity, you will need to identify who can stage the plays and become the actors. If you have a local community theatre group then this will be a good place to start. If there is not such a group then you might want to check with a local community college, university, or even high school to see if you can enlist their help in directing the plays. Each play has five people or less in them. Of course, you will also need a few stage hands, a person to assist with lighting, and an audience. The local community enjoys seeing their local people involved so be as inclusive as possible in the staging. Finally, you will need to attract an audience who is interested in attending your production.

Costs:

Any costs linked with these productions should be small. By using a local school, church, or other public setting, you should be able to host the *SUGAR Plays* without great expense. Most community actors enjoy being in plays and do it for fun and not payment. The props used in the plays are few and so a great deal of work will not be needed to produce them. You will need to think about what you will charge those that attend the play. You could ask for donations, sell tickets ahead of time and consider various prices for youth, senior or others. These are decisions you will need to make.

Activity Duration:

The plays each last about 20 minutes and so the event will likely take about 1½ hour total unless you intend to expand it and include some other things. The practices for the plays will likely take several weeks; your director can guide you in this area. You will need to decide how the play will be offered. Sometimes doing it several evenings with a matinee on two consecutive weekends might give many different people a chance to attend. You will need to decide what will work best in your community and whether your actors can be available.

Materials Needed:

As previously mentioned, the props and costumes needed for the production will not be extensive. However, you will likely need to consider things such as lighting. The place where the production is held will need to be considered and will guide you in considering specific needs you might have

for when the plays are enacted for the public.

Instructions:

The first task is likely to find a director that can assist you in making this production happen. The scripts for the three SUGAR Plays can be found on the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <www.diabetesfamily.net>. You can also find an online video to observe a reading of the plays that took place at Ohio University after they were written. The video may help you get some better ideas about the ways the writers initially visualized the characters in each of the three plays.

The plays are copyrighted, but can be freely used for educational purposes in local communities and for raising money for diabetes prevention throughout the Appalachian region. If you do use the plays, please post information about what you have done on the **Communication** section of the program website or let Dr. Sharon Denham know of your intent to use the plays. No charge will be made to any community group for their educational use. The playwrights will enjoy learning where the plays were performed and how they were received by the audiences.

As you identify the director and actors, you will also need to decide where the play will occur. You may need to form a committee to decide how the event will occur and set the dates. You will need to work on advertisement and publicity. Decide who will be responsible for the program. Your program should include information about the playwrights; you can find this on the website where you located the copies of the plays. You will need some ticket takers and ushers for the play performances. You

may want to consider having refreshments available for sale depending on where the performance occurs.

Be sure to include a table full of information about healthy lifestyles, diabetes prevention, and diabetes self-management. Excellent information is available through the internet and much of it is free. Be sure to allow enough time to order things if you want to give some specific materials to those in attendance. You will also want to have some information about your local diabetes coalition and the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* program. This might be a good place to recruit some new volunteer *SUGAR Helpers* also, so be prepared to take down names and contact information for later follow-up.

Ways to Extend the Activity:

A number of ways exist to extend this activity and you may likely think of even more. The first thing is to consider other things you might want to add to this event. Folks sometimes enjoy a bit longer venue and so you might look around at your local talent and see if there is something you want to put in between the plays. Of course, the things should all have to do with healthy lifestyles and diabetes prevention. Maybe you have a local storyteller that can spin a few yarns, a musical group that wants to perform a special song for the occasion, or a stand-up comedian that can keep people laughing while the actors transform the stage from one play to another. Let your imaginations loose and make the evening a fun event. Who knows, this could turn into an annual program, one that people talk about and look forward to seeing again.

Another thing to consider is combining other work you are doing in the community with this event. For example, if you are doing the *Ask Me Campaign* (see website for *Toolkit Activities*) then you may want to set up a table to talk with folks during intermission. It is a good time to engage people in the campaign and give out buttons, sticky notes or other information about local health resources.

If you have another fund-raiser going on, then you might want to use this opportunity to let people know about it. Or, if you have a campaign such as Community Garden Projects in the works (see website for *Toolkit Activities*), then this could be a great chance to share the information about the plans and sign up some interested people. Take time to consider all the things your coalition and *SUGAR Helpers* are trying to do and then be sure to share that information with this audience. The people that attend the plays could well be interested in other work and might want to become volunteers themselves.

Finally, on the website, you will find a discussion guide for each of the plays. In this type of performance, you may not want to actually have a discussion but you may want to share some of the information with others. You might want to learn a little more about what your viewers know about healthy lifestyles and diabetes. If so, then you might want to encourage those attending to fill out a brief survey of 6-7 quickly answered questions.

Final Word:

If you complete this activity, be sure to return to the **Communicate** section of the *Diabetes: A Family Matter* website <www.diabetesfamily.net> and describe

how you have used this activity in your community. Share the outcomes of the activity. What worked well? What did not work? By doing this, others across the Appalachian region can learn from one another about new and better ways to use these activities. It is likely that you will have some new ideas of your own to contribute.