

Your Air Matters Program

Tulalip Tribes

Program Summary

The Tribal Healthy Homes Network (THHN) has introduced a new program called “Your Air Matters” that focuses on providing culturally relevant tools and resident education and outreach, with the goal of reducing environmental exposures and improving health in Tribal homes. By partnering with and pooling resources from different departments and grant funders and forming a Tribally led partnership, THHN aims to help substantially reduce exposures to indoor air pollutants in the communities with which they work. This program aims to provide a cost-effective resident education tool kit to Tribal homes. THHN and the Tulalip Air Program collaborated with several other departments, built an effective team, and designed and are implementing a strategy to distribute these multi-purpose resident education and healthy homes tool kits.

Strategy

Gillian Mittelstaedt, the Director of THHN and the Tulalip Air Program Coordinator, has a vision—a vision that stretches far beyond traditional approaches, a vision fueled by passion to give others the tools and education they need for a healthy home. Your Air Matters

“What Tribes need is an avenue for support. Right now our program is providing the technical assistance by getting the tools into the hands of individuals. We want to expand it even further to measure the change in knowledge and behavior so we can further improve our program and give the Tribes the support they need.”

– Gillian Mittelstaedt

is a new approach to healthy homes work that goes beyond an inspection and laundry list of to-do's for housing and residents and moves toward a resident engagement and collaborative cost-effective approach to tackling indoor air quality issues.

Tool Kit Essentials

The tool kit includes—

- digital moisture meter
- carbon monoxide detector
- green cleaning kit
- chimney thermometer
- mold removal kit
- non-toxic pest trap
- lead detection kit
- radon gas detection kit
- dust/mite pillow cover
- microfiber cleaning cloth

Tool kits can be customized to include the specific items needed by residents and families to help detect, measure and prevent hazards in their homes. These tool kits are available to anyone.

A complete tool kit costs \$126.98. Shipping costs, not included, will vary depending on the number of kits purchased. Note that the tools in the kit also can be customized, so the cost per kit may be lower. We encourage you to talk with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as your Tribe may be eligible for grants that will help pay for your kits. For more information, please visit www.yourairmatters.org.

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Pilot Program Beginnings

During the pilot stage of the program, 100 tool kits were distributed to the Tulalip Tribes through a Clean Air Act grant from August 2014 to January 2015. The goal of this pilot project was to accomplish two tasks:

- Get kits into the hands of residents through every avenue possible, including newspapers, reservation-wide emails, departments, bingo events, evening community events and health fairs, just to name a few.
- Embed the program within the Tulalip Tribes and work with multiple departments, including environmental programs, health clinics, housing, etc.

Building an Effective Team

Ms. Mittelstaedt had the opportunity to bring the Tulalip community a product that changes lives—a resident education tool kit that is easy to use and cost-effective. Through her many years working in this field, Ms. Mittelstaedt has developed trusting relationships with many different people and departments. “What we did was assembled the tool kits, brought them to the meetings of each department, and sat down and put them on the table and watched what happened,” explains Ms. Mittelstaedt. Consistently, as she started to share background on the program, the staff in the room started taking out the tools, reading the cue cards, and asking questions. The tangible nature of the tool kit and relevance to each department’s work has sparked excitement that she hadn’t seen in previous conversations. All of a sudden, staff from different departments wanted to collaborate and be part of the Your Air Matters program. The tools were essentially selling themselves. To date, the Tulalip housing, health and environment programs, as well as

its women, infants and children (WIC) program, all are collaborating to provide the tool kits and resident education in the community.

Ms. Mittelstaedt’s vision is becoming a reality.

How to Get Involved

Ms. Mittelstaedt explains that the fact that these kits have received buy-in and attention is significant, as she has tried many different approaches to healthy homes and indoor air work in the past, with varying success. Currently, Tribes across the nation can order the tool kits online, through email or over the phone. They can place orders of specific tools customized to their Tribe’s needs, and then the Your Air Matters team helps purchase the tool kits in the most cost-effective way possible. THHN also can provide training and technical assistance on how to develop a program. The Your Air Matters team also attaches cue cards with information about each tool, how it is used, and how it affects indoor air quality and the health of the home. The tools are easy to use, and the cue cards prompt residents to think about potential issues in their home, which gives them the education and potential to change behavior.



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Future of the Program

- THHN's goal is to educate and empower residents to take action on the health of their homes. Current efforts to distribute these kits involve marketing initiatives through THHN, in one-on-one settings, at conferences and meetings, and at community events. They hope to expand their reach through new marketing techniques in the future.
- Other efforts that are taking shape include work on a new way of disseminating this information through health clinics. A patient would come to the clinic with a pertinent health situation like pregnancy or a respiratory condition. The medical provider would refer the patient to the environmental specialist to visit the individual or family, give them a tool kit, and provide some education around healthy housing. The credibility of a medical provider often makes the referral more likely to lead to action.
- Future endeavors also include having an online platform that would allow Tribes to customize cue cards and tools.
- Finally, THHN feels a critical part of the program is the evaluation component—knowing to what degree this program is reaching its goals. Basic surveys are being provided to recipients of the tool

kits to measure change in knowledge and behavior. THHN is working on modifiable surveys for each Tribe that participates in the program. This will allow THHN to understand the effectiveness of the program, continue to improve it, best support the needs of Tribes, and help improve lives across the nation. For more information and instructions on how to order tool kits, visit their website at www.yourairmatters.org. You can also check out the Tribal Healthy Homes Network for more information, training and guidance on indoor air quality issues at www.thhnw.org.



Other Participating Tribes

Quinault Tribe (Washington)

Pedro Tribe (Alaska)

Chickaloon Tribe (Alaska)