

LOCAL CONVENIENCE STORES LABEL AND SELL HEALTHIER FOODS

Community residents learn to make better choice, too

Public Health Problem

- Eating a healthy diet low in saturated fat and higher in fruits, vegetable and whole grains helps prevent heart disease, the cause of about forty percent of all deaths in New York each year.
- If you can't buy it, you can't eat it - so increasing access to healthy foods is a recommended strategy for reducing the risk of chronic diseases including heart disease and diabetes.
- Stewart's Stores is often the only local source of groceries in rural New York communities making residents dependant on their product choices.
- Retail grocer priorities are compatible with public health goals but coordination is needed.

Program

- The Warren/Washington Healthy Heart Program, funded by the New York State Health Department Healthy Heart Program, worked with a local retailer called Stewart's to promote low-fat milk consumption using the retailer's line of milk products. This heart disease risk-reduction strategy for shoppers was promoted in worksites, schools, malls, senior centers and WIC program offices.
- Stewart's management also supports 'community scavenger hunts' developed by the Healthy Heart Program to inspire community residents to discover their community by foot and to focus on healthy food options and other aspects of the health environment in their community.
- Scavenger Hunts, conducted in twelve communities, a school, a park and a mall, are free and geared for people of all ages and abilities. Local Stewart's stores label healthy items to be "found" during the hunts.

Impact

- Grocery stores realized a ten percent increase in the quantity of healthy items sold and a thirty-five percent increase in total register sales, a benefit to the stores and an indication that the Health Heart Program message about healthy eating was communicated effectively.
- Participating stores now carry more than fifteen fresh fruit or vegetable items and whole grain breads, available for the first time in these stores.
- Store shelves and individual foods continue to carry the "Good for You" label to guide shoppers to healthier choices. This labeling concept has also been duplicated and patented by a larger New York grocery chain as a way of promoting healthy items to its customers.

Contact

Kathryn Varney
Glens Falls Hospital
518-926-5906
klvarney@glensfallshosp.org