

Good Food Here: Corner stores increasing access to healthy food in Cleveland's urban core

SUMMARY

Increasing access to healthy food is a key strategy to reducing health disparities. The Health Improvement Partnership-Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga) in the Greater Cleveland area, through the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) funding, increased access to healthier food for approximately 165,350 people throughout Cuyahoga County. Mainly focused in Cleveland's under-resourced urban core, the Good Food Here healthy food retail project aims to encourage corner stores located in priority low-income, high poverty census tracts to stock, maintain and promote healthier food choices for their patrons.

CHALLENGE

While increasing access and opportunity for improved nutrition is important everywhere, there is a disproportionate burden in Cuyahoga County among our urban core communities characterized as low-income, resource-poor communities of color. Differences in access to healthy foods have been documented, with these urban core communities experiencing limited access compared to wealthier, white communities. Based on data from our Cuyahoga County Community Health Needs Assessment, one in two Cleveland residents is living in a 'food desert' area compared to 1 out of 4 for Cuyahoga County as a whole, with ~75% of residents in the REACH priority census tracts living in a food desert. As reported in our Community Health Needs Assessment, one in three adults in Cleveland is obese and only a quarter of adults reported meeting the recommended fruit and vegetable consumption. By increasing access to healthy food and beverages, we provide opportunities to make healthier choices in our urban core environments.

SOLUTION

Based on The Food Trust model, the HIP-Cuyahoga Healthy Eating, Active Living subcommittee developed a robust healthy food retail phase-structured model geared towards encouraging and, then, sustaining healthy food access in locally-owned corner stores. Partnering with the Ohio Department of Health's Good Food Here marketing campaign, the phase-structured model requires a significant amount of commitment from the store owner to stock and maintain at least four healthier food items over a four week period to be considered a program participant. In return, Good Food Here promotional materials are placed within the store, technical assistance is provided to improve healthy product placement and sales, free store marketing is offered in the greater community in the form of flyers and outreach events.

RESULTS

Eighteen stores have successfully passed to the second phase of the program by sustaining four new healthy items; two items from the fruit and vegetable category and two items from any other category: dairy, whole grains, meat/fish/poultry, packaged beans/nuts/fish, healthy snack or healthy beverages. The four new items must be continuously available in the store for over four weeks in order to pass in to phase two. These eighteen stores represent at least one store in all seven of our target neighborhoods.

Ninety-seven stores were screened, fifty-five of those stores were pitched the program and out of the 55, 24 were enrolled.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS: Next Steps

The Good Food Here program is one of many solutions to accessing healthy foods within the targeted communities. Through HIP-Cuyahoga REACH, the team was able to develop critical relationships and bridge connections between local stores and organizations, such as the community development corporations (CDCs), local stores, and food distribution companies. As a result, there are long-standing impacts on the local food systems and environments within the communities, as well as an increased awareness among local stores, organizations and residents about access to healthy foods within their communities.



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