

Corner Stores in Missouri Make Healthy Food Options Easier to Buy

Kara Lubischer

Summary

Nearly 319,000 Missouri residents in low-income communities now have increased access to fresh produce at local corner stores. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS) partnered with the University of Missouri Extension program to expand Stock Healthy, Shop Healthy (SHSH) programs across the state. The program aims to improve access to healthier foods in rural and low-income areas. With the support of SHSH, about 22 Missouri corner stores now offer affordable, healthier food choices.

Challenge

In 2014, Missouri's adult obesity rate was 30.2%. Following a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy diet and regular physical activity can help prevent obesity. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggests eating a diet that includes whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean protein, but access to these foods can be difficult for some residents in rural or low-income communities. In Missouri, full service grocery stores that offer fresh fruit and vegetables can be up to 30 miles away in some rural communities. Such distances can make it difficult for residents to get recommended foods like fruits, whole grains, and vegetables.



Your Involvement is Key

Purchasing fresh produce at local corner stores is helping to improve the health of Missouri's residents. To learn more about Shop Healthy, Stock Healthy or how to get involved, visit <http://extension.missouri.edu/stockhealthy/>. This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

Solution

In 2014, the University of Missouri Extension partnered with MDHSS to expand SHSH programs to corner stores in rural and low-income areas across the state. SHSH provides webinar trainings and two SHSH toolkits: one for retailers and one for communities. The retailer toolkit provides healthier foods information, safe handling and storing guidelines for produce, product placement, and marketing suggestions. The Community Toolkit guides community partners in working with stores and building demand for healthy foods. This effort aims to increase sales for corner stores, improve the availability of healthier foods in these areas, and encourage residents to eat fresh fruits and vegetables.

Results

Twenty-two corner stores across Missouri are now considered healthy corner stores. That means, nearly 319,000 residents—spanning 11 rural and 11 urban neighborhoods—can buy fresh fruits and vegetables close to home. Almost 30 community partners, including hospitals and schools, worked together to provide store owners educational information and other resources on the benefits of healthy corner stores. Also, more than 40 in-store improvements were made. Examples include updates to food displays, painting walls to attract customers to healthy food choices, and repositioning produce to make it easier for residents to choose healthier foods. With these improvements, early evaluation data showed that corner stores now dedicate 8.7% more shelf space to healthier food selections.

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"Stock Healthy Shop Healthy is a wonderful way to make healthy food available to the public and it has good signage to help people identify those healthy foods at the store."

- Megan Shamleffer, store owner

Sustainable Success

MDHSS will continue to seek out and partner with community organizations including the University of Missouri Extension to make healthy living easier for residents. The university extension will continue to identify and work with corner stores across the state to set up SHSH programs. The university extension will also provide ongoing technical assistance and educational resources to help corner stores continue to offer healthy foods to Missouri residents.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

