

Community Health Promotion Initiative to Improve Healthy Food Choices in an Urban Population

Tami Jakubowski, DNP, CPNP-PC, CSN

Tracy Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN

The College of New Jersey



Trenton Healthy Corner Stores

- The purpose of the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network is to improve access to and healthy food choices among a diverse urban population.
- The Network is part of a statewide program implemented in New Jersey to increase healthy, affordable food choices in local corner stores.
- Corner stores are often located near schools, providing schoolchildren with easy access to unhealthy snack choices like chips, candy, and soda.



The Problem

- 10% of the New Jersey population lives in food deserts, lacking access to healthy food options
- Lower-income urban neighborhoods with decreased access also have higher rates of childhood obesity



Healthy Corner Stores

- Each corner store was provided with a small refrigerated section to display in the front of the store for produce.
- Each participant receives four Heart Bucks (each \$1), redeemable for any heart-healthy food items in the corner store
- Expanded by The Food Trust to include the Heart Smarts Program, including nutrition lessons and Health Screenings.



Benefits to Families

- Nutrition education and Health Screenings.
- Referral process for follow up is in place if needed.
- Healthy snack choices are displayed at the front of the store encouraging children to make healthy choices.



Methods/Implementation

- Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network was expanded to include five urban corner stores.
- The chosen stores were charged to promote, market, and display healthy food choices.
- Each corner store was provided with a small refrigerated section to display in the front of the store for produce.
- Heart Smarts Program, a local chef prepares healthy recipes shoppers can taste test while learning about healthy food choices.



Heart Smarts Program

- All recipe ingredients are available for purchase on site, and each participant receives four Heart Bucks (each \$1), redeemable for any heart-healthy food items in the corner store.
- Participating families benefit from nutrition education and Health Screenings (blood pressure, BMI), by a registered nurse with a referral process for follow up if needed.
- Children visiting Healthy Corner Stores after school see healthy snack choices such as fruit and yogurt on display in the front of the store, encouraging healthier choices.



Results

- Success was measured by community interest, participation , and amount of produce and healthy food choice sales.
- Store owners report increased frequency in restocking due to selling out of produce, rather than spoilage as in the past.
- Increased sales of healthy food items and decreased waste allowed pricing on healthier food options to decrease
- Corner store profits and customer requests for healthy food items increased.



Conclusion

By increasing access to healthy food choices, New Jersey is improving the health of their children and families, building a culture of health.

