



Youth Bring Healthier Retail Options to East Salinas

Intervention Summary

Over the summer, LHD staff worked with CHAMACOS Youth Council to partner with stores in one of the CX3 neighborhoods. The CHAMACOS youth surveyed store owners and customers at six stores. The goal was to learn about the opinions of customers regarding the availability of healthy food options at local corner stores, to learn about the obstacles that may prevent store owners from offering healthy foods through a series of store owner interviews and to encourage stores to make healthier changes based on customers' feedback and recommendations. The CHAMACOS youth surveyed over 200 customers and found the most selected reason for shopping at a store was "It's close to where you live," and the most requested item for stores to carry was a greater variety of fruits and vegetables. Another finding was having at least one child in the household, being 50+ in age and/or being English dominant, were significantly predictive of purchasing more fruits and vegetables, along with several other findings. Surveys from the store owner interviews showed that all stores carried a variety of fruits and vegetables, all store owners identified obesity as being a problem in their neighborhood and 66% believed the main causes are lack of exercise and low priced unhealthy foods, among other findings.

Three of the six store owners have shown interest in making changes, such as:

- Creating an aisle of healthy foods
- Adding healthier items at the checkout lanes
- Adding healthier milk options and marketing
- Creating a more visible organic produce section
- Offering fresh fruit cups or expanding the variety of fruits and vegetables sold

LHD staff is currently partnering with these owners to bring changes and provide technical assistance, support and resources.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Recruiting stores was a challenge. The youth approached over twenty stores and in the end six stores agreed to participate in the project. Some of the challenges to encourage stores to make healthy changes are included below. If store owners don't speak English or Spanish as a first language they tended to refuse right away. Some of the stores relied heavily on school-aged customers so collecting surveys from adults took many hours. Store owners found results surprising, yet interesting. Some of the obstacles for healthy change included: permit/lease issues, negative outcome from past attempts to change, store owners thought they didn't need to make any changes and/or permission was needed from a corporate level, the business may be too new, have changed owners recently and/or business was slow.

Depending on stores and findings, each store received a list of recommendations created specifically for them. Some of the recommendations were:

- Stock a variety of healthy items
- Place healthy items at checkout area
- Promote healthy foods with NEOP Retail campaign materials
- Place water at eye level
- Prepare fresh fruit cups
- Advertise specials on healthy items
- Use ripe fruit as free samples for customers

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Since the youth have now returned to school, LHD staff is continuing to partner with store owners who want to make healthy changes.

Some of our short and long term goals:

- To partner with local schools or youth organizations in order to establish a youth group or internship program to continue healthy food retail efforts.
- Continue the project with an intervention phase (offer incentives for stores that try a healthy checkout lane)
- Partner with City Planning or Public Works departments to request incentive and/or resources for stores (ie. grants for refrigeration, shelving, crates/bins, training and large health promotion posters for store fronts)
- Reward stores with certificates or posters for being a Healthy Retail Partner
- Develop a quality assurance measure to encourage sustainability of the program

Contact information about this Narrative

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