

## With so many families needing better access to healthy foods, is a solution just around the corner?

Going to the grocery store is something most of us take for granted. But for 29.7 million Americans who live in food deserts<sup>i</sup>—areas where it is difficult to buy fresh food—that trip to the grocery store is anything but easy. Across the country, low-income zip codes have 25 percent fewer chain supermarkets compared to middle-income zip codes.<sup>ii</sup> The result? Children and families must rely heavily on their neighborhood corner or convenience stores for food purchases, which often may not offer fresh produce, low-fat dairy, lean meats and other healthy foods. That can lead to a greater risk of obesity and diabetes.<sup>iii, iv, v</sup> This issue costs all of us. The U.S. spends an estimated \$190 billion annually on obesity-related conditions, or 21% of all U.S. health care costs.<sup>vi</sup>

### The facts about corner stores may surprise you:

- There are more corner stores in low-income and high-minority urban communities, and food purchases from these stores may contribute to higher energy intake and consumption of less healthy foods and beverages by urban school children.<sup>vii</sup>
- Small food stores commonly sell highly processed items that are high in fat and low in nutrients, and they also tend to charge higher prices for their food when compared with grocery stores and supermarkets.<sup>viii, ix</sup>
- Teenagers who live near convenience stores have higher BMIs and consume more sugary drinks than their peers who live farther away.<sup>x</sup>
- More than 40% of elementary school students in one study shopped at a corner store twice a day, often purchasing chips, candy and soda.<sup>xi</sup>

But what if these stores weren't contributing to the nation's obesity epidemic? What if, instead, these stores were part of the solution? What if access to healthy, affordable food was just around the corner?

### Healthy corner store initiatives tap into a community's existing retail footprint to make healthier food options more accessible:

- Interventions that utilize social marketing materials such as shelf labels and signs can help consumers identify healthy options.<sup>xii</sup>
- Providing equipment such as additional shelving and refrigeration can help sell fresh fruits and vegetables.<sup>xiii</sup>
- In fact, the amount of shelf space dedicated to fruits and vegetables at neighborhood food stores is positively associated with greater consumption of fruits and vegetables among residents nearby.<sup>xiv, xv</sup>

America deserves to have access to fresh, affordable and healthy foods. Healthy corner stores can make the difference.

**{ DID YOU KNOW: From 2010-2012, Philadelphia's Healthy Corner Store Network successfully converted 100 local corner stores, which each introduced an average of 44 healthy food products.<sup>xvi</sup>**

## SOURCES

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