



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Small Changes in Retail Stores Can Lead to Big Health Impacts

Owners, Community Health Advocates Working with Vermont Department of Health to Offer Healthier Options, Reduce Risks Associated with Alcohol, Tobacco, & Unhealthy Foods

For Immediate Release: May 4, 2011
Media Contact: Communication Office
Vermont Department of Health
802-863-7281

COLCHESTER – Approximately 75 community health advocates from around the state are expected to meet today with the Vermont Department of Health to learn more about how they can help owners and managers of independently-owned grocery stores, convenience stores and gas stations create retail environments that encourage healthier food and beverage choices and discourage tobacco and alcohol use.

The “Healthy Retailers” program training will take place at the Hampton Inn in Colchester. More than 50 community health advocates participated in a similar training last week in White River Junction.

To identify some of the challenges faced by independent retailers, the Vermont Department of Health interviewed owners and managers at 15 retail outlets across the state. Their perspectives on how to create healthier environments within their stores led to the changes that are now being made.

Examples of positive changes at the stores – considered the center of many communities around the state – include raising the height of alcohol and tobacco signage so that it’s at the eye level of adults, not kids; displaying water in front of less-healthy options like sugary beverages; and recognizing that some customers are looking for local, healthier options versus pre-packaged goods – and offering both options.

“Point-of-sale advertising and in-store displays have been shown to increase the number of unplanned tobacco and alcohol purchases, and they have the potential to make tobacco and alcohol seem ‘normal’ to kids,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “The community coalitions are working with owners to make their stores a healthier place for the community to shop and to make the healthy choice the easier choice.”

To help the community residents live healthier, store owners are being offered free point-of-sale materials including posters that show active Vermonters engaged in healthy activities. The materials emphasize that making small choices every day to eat healthier and be more active all add up to a big change for the better.

Posters for the Healthy Retailers program pose the question: “What healthy change can you make today?” The poster series features Sugarbush skier John Egan, Middlebury College hurdler (and Burlington resident) Kevin Chu, Stowe High School soccer player Hannah McNulty and Colchester skateboarder Ryan Edwards.

The Vermont Department of Health and health advocates also will provide store owners with table tents, display clings and bags, and bags that encourage shoppers to make healthy choices.

“We love offering our customers healthier choices and we’ve already seen an increase in requests for produce and other fresh-food options,” said Lauri Connolly, owner of the Colchester Variety Store on Roosevelt Highway in Colchester. “We feel that we have a responsibility to offer choices to our customers, and we’re proud to do our part to keep Vermont a healthy place to live.”

To find out more about the Healthy Retailers program, visit <http://healthvermont.gov/fitandhealthy>.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and join us on [Facebook](#) for health information and alerts.

###

