

HEART SMARTS



Partnering with corner stores to improve community health



The Challenge

In the United States, more than 29 million children and adults live in communities where a healthy diet is simply out of reach. Like many cities across the country, Philadelphia is grappling with high rates of heart disease, diabetes and obesity, especially in underserved neighborhoods without access to nutritious, affordable foods.

In communities that lack supermarkets, families depend on corner stores—also known as mom-and-pop shops or bodegas—for food purchases, but most of these stores sell packaged foods and offer few healthy options.



The Food Trust Solution

In 2004, The Food Trust identified corner stores as potential partners in the effort to improve access to healthy, affordable foods in underserved communities. The Food Trust created the Healthy Corner Store Initiative to support corner store owners committed to increasing the healthy food inventory in their stores and to encourage customers to make healthier choices.

Through this initiative, corner stores have emerged as powerful community connectors, providing an opportunity to reach people where they live. The Food Trust's **Heart Smarts** program, launched in 2010, is a new model that combines food access with nutrition education as well as health and social services for all customers, free of charge. Heart Smarts empowers lower-income individuals to improve their health and reduce their risk of diet-related disease through nutrition education, health screenings and counseling in a supportive store environment, where customers are encouraged to conveniently buy healthy, affordable food.

With the growth of healthy corner store initiatives across the country, combined with increased interest from health care institutions to provide neighborhood-based preventive health services, the Heart Smarts model can link primary care to public health with a focus on the community.

Heart Smarts by the numbers

Customers who spoke to a nutrition educator at least once were **twice as likely** to report that they're now making healthy changes.

Among customers with high blood pressure who returned for a screening, **over one-third** have lowered their blood pressure.

Source: Jefferson Center for Urban Health

40% of Heart Bucks coupons have been used on fruits and vegetables, and 27% on whole grains.



OUR PARTNERS

To make the Heart Smarts program a success, The Food Trust collaborates with:

- Corner store owners
- Food distributors
- Health care systems
- Local public health departments
- Corporate supporters
- Private foundations
- State and local health departments
- Community groups

How The Food Trust Can Help In Your Community

The Food Trust has become a trusted adviser for healthy corner store and small store programs throughout the country, using evidence-based tools and approaches that increase healthy food access and promote healthy behaviors.

Technical assistance and training is provided to support healthier stores, businesses and communities in a variety of ways. This includes working with corner store owners to increase inventory of healthy options and placing marketing materials throughout corner stores to raise customer awareness of healthy food options.

In our Heart Smarts stores, The Food Trust provides enhanced programming that can include:

- **Nutrition Education:** We teach weekly lessons covering topics like whole grains, sodium, sugar-sweetened beverages and making healthy choices at the corner store deli. We also provide health-focused tip sheets and recipe cards for participants to take home.
- **Recipe Tasting:** We offer free taste tests during every lesson; recipes include dishes like salsa, smoothies, whole wheat pizza and unsweetened applesauce. All recipes cost less than \$5 to serve a family of four, and use ingredients found in corner stores.
- **Health Screenings:** We provide health screenings at select corner stores at the same time each month through partnerships with local health care providers. Participants are screened for blood pressure, given weight checks, and are offered healthy lifestyle counseling, referrals and resources, including information on smoking cessation.
- **Heart Bucks:** Customers who participate in health screenings and nutrition lessons can receive healthy food incentive coupons to spend on heart-healthy items in the store.



ITEMS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE WITH HEART BUCKS

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Healthy proteins
- No-sodium-added foods
- Water
- Non-fat and low-fat dairy
- Healthy snacks with 100 calories or less
- No-sugar-added food and drinks



"This is a great thing for the community. For a lot of older folks, it's hard to get to the doctor or the grocery store. Not only is coming to the corner store easy, but now it's great for our health."

— William, Heart Smarts participant, Philadelphia, PA

"We have engaged hundreds of individuals with screening, counseling and referral, all because of the relationships and partnerships The Food Trust has developed."

— James Plumb, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Jefferson Center for Urban Health, Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals, Jefferson Health, and Vice Chair, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University



A HISTORY OF SUCCESS

In the years following The Food Trust's 2004 pilot project in Philadelphia, the Healthy Corner Store Initiative has grown steadily and substantially. The program works to increase the availability and awareness of healthy foods in corner stores in Philadelphia and elsewhere.

In 2010, the Healthy Corner Store Initiative became part of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's Get Healthy Philly initiative. In partnership with this citywide public health initiative, The Food Trust greatly expanded its corner store program in Philadelphia, while also adding in-store nutrition education and healthy food taste tests to stores. The Healthy Corner Store Initiative has also expanded into communities throughout Pennsylvania and into other states, and has served as a model for other organizations committed to improving food access across the country.

In 2013, the Hearts Smarts program initiated health screenings with the Jefferson Center for Urban Health. The program has provided promising results, and additional health care partners and stores have since been added.

To learn more about Heart Smarts and the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, visit thefoodtrust.org.



The Food Trust




Ensuring That Everyone Has Access To Affordable, Nutritious Food

For more than 20 years, The Food Trust has been working to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions.

The Food Trust's comprehensive approach includes improving food environments and teaching nutrition education in schools; working with corner store owners to increase healthy offerings and helping customers make healthier choices; managing farmers markets in communities that lack access to affordable produce; and encouraging grocery store development in underserved communities.

Learn more about The Food Trust: thefoodtrust.org

1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd. • One Penn Center, Suite 900 • Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 575-0444 • contact@thefoodtrust.org

   @TheFoodTrust

Photographs by Dave Tavani. Copyright by The Food Trust 2016


The Food Trust
THEFOODTRUST.ORG