

Campesinos Sin Fronteras REACH Program

A Story of Success for the Community

Challenge

Just one year ago, shelves full of sodas and sweetened energy drinks welcomed thousands of clients of Mercado Food City that operates in San Luis, Arizona. San Luis is a border community with a population of approximately 30 thousand, the majority of whom are of Mexican origin. According to the most recent statistics, 41.4 percent of Latinos in San Luis suffer from obesity or overweight - above the national average that stands at 41 percent.

Solution

Thanks to the efforts initiated by the San Luis REACH Program, "My Community in Motion," in 2013 the non-profit organization Campesinos Sin Fronteras established a collaborative agreement with four grocery stores. The stores agreed to replace soft drinks and foods of low nutritional value - which at the time were displayed in the most prominent showcase of the store - with an ample variety of fruits and vegetables with labels showing their nutritional value.

Results

According to the data revealed by Alejandra López, General Manager of Mercado Food City, the sale of fruits and vegetables rose between 25 and 30 percent during the first week this collaborative agreement was implemented. The changes impacted more than ten thousand clients whose access to fruits and vegetables was facilitated. Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables has been shown to reduce the risk of obesity and being overweight, in addition to helping prevent chronic ailments such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

In San Luis, Arizona, the REACH Program has contributed not only by improving access to healthy foods for a population that suffers from a wide array of disparities; but also by helping reverse statistics which show that in Arizona, 28 percent of residents consume a soda every day of the week, that 64 percent of adults are overweight and 14.6 percent of adolescents suffer from obesity.

Sustaining Success

At Campesinos Sin Fronteras we are confident that we are well under way to improving nutrition and breaking stereotypes which link socioeconomic status with obesity and being overweight. An example of this success is Martha Guerra, an agricultural worker with three young children, who shared her buying experience after the changes at Mercado Food City:

“...Well you can notice what they did, because before when you would enter the store the very first thing that you would see were the sodas and jarred soups and of course, these were the first things the children would place in the cart.”

“The first time that my children went (right after the modifications) I was surprised that they proceeded for the cucumbers, they asked me if they could buy cucumbers and chili, so I took advantage and also took oranges...that day we ate the fruit in pico de gallo, so now I know that when I enter the store I go and check the fruit and vegetables that are on sale...and that is good, because we can save money and eat well...these small changes in the stores are what allow us to make changes and eat healthier.”