

# Bringing Fruits and Vegetables Front and Center

## Chautauqua County Health Network



The Chautauqua County Health Network (CCHN) is working with Allen Street Grocery to ensure customers can easily access fruits and vegetables.

People crave fresh fruits and vegetables, and the demand for these healthy products is only expected to grow. After all, “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Unfortunately, for far too many people, healthy food is simply out of reach. Accessing high-quality fresh food in many communities throughout New York means either traveling significant distances or paying high prices for often-wilting vegetables and overripe fruit. This negatively influences the health and well-being of residents as well as the commercial vitality needed to make neighborhoods livable and local economies thrive.

### So Close, Yet So Far— No Produce in Sight

Surrounded by abundant farmland, Chautauqua County is one of New York State’s agriculture capitals. Yet residents of Jamestown, the heart of Chautauqua County, struggle to find healthy, affordable fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood retail stores. Local ‘mom and pop’ shops are being replaced by large chain stores that often do not provide fresh produce at a reasonable price, if at all. Limited transportation options further complicate access on the south side of Jamestown, the most densely populated and poor area of the city. One consequence of these barriers is poor health outcomes, reflected in local data that reveal that in Chautauqua County, 36% of children and 63% of adults are overweight or obese.



Healthy corner display

### Healthy Retail—Front and Center

Allen Street Grocery, a store located in Jamestown’s food desert, was identified as a prime location for offering residents affordable fruits and vegetables. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC) staff from CCHN contacted the owner and spoke with him about the importance of nutrition services and how small changes to his store’s layout could make a big difference in his community’s health.

In March 2018, Allen Street Grocery launched a “healthy retail corner” that displays nutritious, low-cost fruits and vegetables in the front of the store. Customers cannot help but notice it as they enter, and sales of vegetables and fruit—apples and bananas especially—have increased.



*"I'm too poor to buy junk. I need every dollar to buy me as much of the stuff my kids really need as I can get. I'm glad this store is selling fresh food." Allen Street Grocery shopper*

## Partnering to Promote Health

With the support of CCHN, Allen Street Grocery general manager Scott Miller plans to enhance access and reach more low-income individuals and families. He is planning food demonstrations that will allow residents to taste available produce and show them how to prepare it.

In addition, Allen Street Grocery, with CCHN's help, has decided to become a Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) vendor. WIC vouchers help mothers buy healthy foods but Jamestown has no stores that accept it. Allen Street Grocery's certification as a WIC vendor will ensure continuous availability of affordable fruits and vegetables. As more fresh food becomes a staple part of the store's inventory, the healthy corner can grow into a 'healthy aisle,' and perhaps one day, a 'healthy store.'



**to learn more**

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L-R: Angie Jeager and Molly Howell, nutritionists; Scott Miller, store manager; Elise Cusimano, healthy retail consultant; and Brandon McElrath, CCHN school coordinator in front of Allen Street Grocery's healthy corner.



## Creating Healthy Schools and Communities

*The places where we live, learn, work, and play all contribute to our ability to become and stay healthy. Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC), a five-year (2015-2020) New York State Department of Health-funded initiative, is helping build stronger, healthier communities.*