

# CHIL Coalition Helps Local Retailer and Restaurant Highlight Healthy Food Items

by: Meryl Smith

## SUMMARY

Thanks to collaboration between the Choosing Health in Lake County (CHIL) coalition and a local food retailer and restaurant, county residents have increased access to information and resources that encourage healthy food choices. Through shelf labels and informational signs at a grocery store and a healthy menu guide at a restaurant, the CHIL coalition has helped generate a message within the community about the impact of healthy food choices on long-term health.



## CHALLENGE

For residents of Lake County, chronic diseases such as heart disease and obesity are present in epidemic proportions. According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), the leading causes of death in Lake County are heart disease and cancer. Lake County ranks 70 out of 82 counties in Michigan for health outcomes. In addition 1 in 3 residents are obese and/or overweight, 1 in 3 have hypertension, 1 in 10 have diabetes and 1/3 of the population have high cholesterol, according to the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey 2014-2015. Nearly all of these health outcomes are worse than the state and national averages. With about 30% of the population living below the poverty level and very limited public transportation system, the county lacks the resources needed to ensure that residents have adequate access to healthy foods.

## YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

You can help address the food access needs of your community by volunteering your time with a local food pantry, or by donating fresh fruits and vegetables to local pantries and community centers. You can also help by advocating for initiatives, such as community gardens or gardener gleaning programs, in your own community. Please feel free to contact CHIL with any questions, comments, or concerns as they relate to your specific community needs.

*""There are so many food options on grocery store shelves and on a restaurant menu, which makes choosing a healthy product challenging. The CHIL shelf labels stand out and will make it easier for the consumer to select the healthiest food."*

*- Meryl Smith, CLS MA RD*

## Contact

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## SOLUTION

As an effort to address the long-term health concerns of residents, members of the CHIL coalition worked with local businesses to implement adaptations in the retail environment. The coalition developed a healthy shelf labeling system for local grocery stores, with insight from the Minneapolis Health Department. In addition, CHIL created healthy menu guides for local restaurants. The menu guides and shelf labels help patrons identify food and menu items that meet the general nutrition recommendations set by the USDA. Registered Dietitian and coalition leadership team member, Meryl Smith, provided her expertise in ensuring that food items aligned with these guidelines.

## RESULTS

As a result of this initiative, low-income families and residents who shop at this grocer or eat at this local restaurant, will have access to information that encourages healthier choices. Managing staff at Irons Cafe, stated that, "customers are noticing the newly placed healthy menu guide on each table." As a result of the shelf labeling project, the store manager at Houseman's grocery store requested a continued partnership with CHIL, suggesting a future cooking demonstration for shoppers to sample healthy foods.

## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The CHIL coalition's goal is to sustain the project beyond the funding period by recruiting additional restaurants, grocery stores, and food pantries in the coming year. Coalition members are in the process of working with a food market in Dublin, MI and a restaurant in Baldwin, MI. In addition, we plan to work closely with the existing Lake County Food Council with healthy shelf labeling for a food pantry who is working on becoming a self choice pantry. The coalition has discussed additional local funding options in order to continue this work.