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Research and Evaluation of Food Trust Programs and Initiatives

Corner Store Campaign

Program Description: The initiative aims to educate children and their parents about choosing healthy snack food and beverages purchases in corner stores, and the benefits of healthful eating.

Research and Evaluation: The Food Trust, in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania's Weight and Eating and Disorders Program, is currently engaged in a preliminary study of The Corner Store Initiative. Before and after the 6 week long pilot intervention, caloric intake from snacks is measured through intercept surveys outside of corner stores in close proximity to 2 different schools. Data from the pilot should be available in Fall 2005. A second study is expected to take place during the Fall of 2005.

Funding: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Farmers' Market Program

Program Description: Through the Farmers' Market Program, The Food Trust provides nutrition education, promotes healthy eating and makes fresh, nutritious and affordable foods available to residents of Philadelphia and its surrounding areas by operating a network of 19 farmers' markets.

Research and Evaluation: Each year customers are surveyed at least once, typically at the end of the season during the months of October and November. Customers are asked about a range of items including awareness of the market location, shopping frequency, consumption of fruits and vegetables, knowledge of the food guide pyramid, consumption of a variety of fruits and vegetables and the extent of the nutrition education they received.

Funding: A variety of public and private sources

Kindergarten Initiative

Program Description: The Kindergarten Initiative incorporates classroom nutrition education, locally grown snacks and parent outreach into a comprehensive program to set healthy eating habits early in a child's life.

Research and Evaluation: Objectives include: encouraging students to make healthy food choices, increasing students' awareness and consumption of locally grown food, engaging teachers so they will encourage students to consume healthy foods through lessons and activities, supporting and encouraging parents/guardians to provide children with the healthiest food and beverage selections available, and to expand and develop the initiative. Evaluation tools include observation, pre-post knowledge surveys among students and parents, monthly documentation of teacher efforts, teacher interviews and end-of-year program surveys, and monthly documentation of locally grown snack food distribution, including volumes of product purchased and distributed.

Funding: Claneil Foundation

Please support The Food Trust though the United Way Campaign. The Food Trust's Specific Care Code is 09195.

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Comprehensive School Nutrition Policy Initiative

Program Description: The intervention consisted of a multi-faceted, policy-driven program that focused on: 1) nutrition standards for foods and beverages served in schools; 2) nutrition education and staff training within existing curricula and 3) social marketing efforts to change student behavior. The program was guided by School Health Councils that conducted self-assessments of policies related to nutrition and physical activity using the CDC's School Health Index.

Research and Evaluation: The Food Trust in partnership with the University of Pennsylvania's Weight and Eating and Disorders Program has undertaken a three year longitudinal study of a school-based obesity prevention effort. We assessed the effects a policy-based, prevention program on BMI in 10 K-8, elementary schools. Half of the schools were randomized to a policy-based intervention, and half served as no-treatment controls. All schools had at least 50% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Assessments of weight and height were conducted at baseline and after 1 year. Participants were 921 4th-6th graders (415 M, 506 F) with a mean (SD) age of 11.1 (1.0) y and BMI z-score of 0.68 (1.1). Using CDC criteria, 1.9% of participants were underweight, 56.7% were normal weight, 17.1% were at risk for overweight and 24.3% were overweight. Study results should be available Fall/Winter 2005.

Funding: Centers for Disease Control

School Market Program

Program Description: The School Market program engages students in the establishment of a healthy food market. Students operate a fruit market in their school where they promote and sell healthy snacks to their classmates. The market has nutrition and business skills education components.

Research and Evaluation: In order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the nutrition education programming in the schools a comprehensive evaluation is undertaken. Evaluation measures seek to identify changes in student knowledge, behavior and affect. A process evaluation includes surveying of parents, teachers and administrators to identify strengths and weaknesses in the program. A random sample of students, by class, are surveyed at the start of programming and at the end of the school year. Survey results show that students who participated in the program increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables by 2.1. daily servings, and their consumption of water by nearly one glass per day.

Funding: A variety of public and private sources

SNAKS Project

Program Description: The goal of the project is to create a tool to identify what food options are available in a variety of neighborhoods in Philadelphia and to determine which options students are most likely to encounter on their way to and from school.

Research and Evaluation: The University of Pennsylvania's Weight and Eating and Disorders Program is responsible for the evaluation component of the project. Staff from the University is taking the height and weight of all children in the schools and have conducted a survey with 5th graders to determine how they get to school, what they eat on the way, and what they do after school. As part of the program evaluation, the Cartographic Modeling Lab is using GIS and spatial analysis techniques to collect relevant field data and integrate information about the neighborhoods in which the kids live. The CML designed a data collection program using ArcPad, GIS software for hand-held PCs, in order to map the location of all food stores and recreation opportunities nearby the schools and to inventory the types of food available. The CML is integrating administrative data from its Philadelphia Neighborhood Information System (NIS) related to crime, housing conditions and abandonment, real estate sales, and housing construction and from the US Census. These data will be modeled with data collected from students to determine how neighborhood conditions impact BMI and choices relating to food consumption and physical activity. The CML is also designing a second ArcPad application to map the route that kids walk to school, to determine what stores are located within the most heavily traveled corridors, and how neighborhood crime and disorder influence choices about where to walk

Funding: Center for Disease Control & Prevention

Shipping Point Terminal Feasibility Study

Over the course of the next 18 months, The Food Trust will be engaged in conducting a research, marketing, and operations study for a proposed series of Shipping Point Terminals statewide that would allow family farmers to aggregate, pack and ship their produce to markets across the state. The goal of this agricultural feasibility study is to adequately measure the demand for, ideal location of, and costs of building up to 6 shipping points in the state of Pennsylvania.

Funding: PA Department of Community and Economic Development

Statewide Poll: Soda in Schools and Junk Food Tax

A survey of 804 adult Pennsylvanians was conducted by Terry Madonna Opinion Research, a professional research firm. The survey interviewing was conducted between 1/24/05 and 2/13/05. The final estimates are weighted to adjust for unequal probabilities of selection and non-response. Research indicates 8 out of 10 Pennsylvanians are in favor of selling only water, fruit juice and milk in school vending machines, and are opposed to vending machines offering soda and drinks with similar amounts of added sugar. The results were consistent across the state, with 80%-85% of individuals surveyed in each region being in favor of selling only 100% juice, milk, or water in schools. When responding to a separate question, 9 out of 10 respondents indicated that low-fat milk should be sold in school vending machines. The poll also found that 63% of Pennsylvanians favor a sales tax on soda and junk food to raise money for school nutrition programs. The sample error for the survey is 3.5 percent. Telephone numbers for the survey were generated via random digit dialing. Respondents were randomly selected within each household. For a full

Funding: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Food Trust Consulting Projects, 2005

Sustainable Food Center: Austin Farmers' Market

The Food Trust worked with the Sustainable Food Center (Austin, TX) as consultants to evaluate the spectrum of components involved in running a mission-oriented farmers' market. Operations considered included market sustainability, managing market activities, evaluation of the supporting management structures for the market, and ideas to streamline and integrate operations while increasing vendors and customers.

Lancaster Central Market

As part of a consulting team, The Food Trust provided feedback and guidance on operations of the Lancaster Central Market, as part of their goal to create a Master Plan for upcoming years. In addition to strategic planning advice, The Food Trust conducted a customer intercept survey of nearly 300 patrons identifying characteristics of the core shopper, spending trends/purchasing analysis etc.