

Healthy Retailers Are Making A Positive Influence

Retail stores are becoming "Healthy Retailers" throughout Vermont, with support from the Vermont Department of Health and area prevention coalitions. The stores are diverse; from gas stations to rural country stores. By being Healthy Retailers, the stores are showing their interest in the health and well-being of their customers by creating a retail environment that encourages healthier food and beverage options and reduces youth exposure to the promotion of tobacco and alcohol products. Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition (BAPC) has supported five local Healthy Retailers since last year.

Do you know where the "Healthy Retailers" are in our community? Our local "Healthy Retailers" are Avenue Grocery on Western Avenue in Brattleboro, Brattleboro Mobil at Exit 3, Dummerston Sunoco at Exit 4, Guilford Community Store, and Putney General Store. Over the past year, our local Healthy Retailers have shown their strong commitment to increasing healthy food and beverage options as well as reducing or eliminating alcohol and/or tobacco promotion.

Avenue Grocery removed all but one alcohol sign and continues to have no tobacco signage. Also, the store no longer sell flavored tobacco products. Brattleboro Mobil has eliminated alcohol floor displays, pre-printed alcohol signage from windows, signage promoting alco-pops and 95% of cooler door alcohol advertisements. Dummerston Sunoco reduced inside tobacco signage by more than half and alcohol signage by a third and continue to not place signage on windows or outside of the store. Guilford Community Store opened in June with limited alco-pops and tobacco products, no flavored tobacco, and does not have any alcohol or tobacco promotional materials. Putney General Store had been a "Healthy Retailer" since last November with no advertisement of alcohol or tobacco products. Under new management, the store continues not to promote any alcohol products and has eliminating all tobacco products.

You may be asking, what are alco-pops? According to the Alcohol Justice website, the alcohol industry highly promotes "alco-pops" which are flavored malt beverages because they effectively target teenagers. Alco-pops are "pre-mixed, sweetened alcoholic drinks that taste like juice and soda; packaged in brightly-colored cans, similar to energy drinks; priced low enough to effectively target underage drinkers, especially young women; and are often supersized- up to 12% alcohol which is equivalent to four to five beers. Many state attorneys general call them a 'binge in a can'.

Does in-store alcohol and tobacco advertisement really make that much of an impact on youth? Multiple studies have shown that greater exposure to alcohol and tobacco advertising contributes to an increase in drinking and tobacco use among underage customers. According to the Center for Public Health and Tobacco Policy, 93.4% of tobacco product manufacturers' \$8.49 billion marketing budget was spent on in-store marketing in 2010. The Center of Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) states that "at least fourteen studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol advertising and marketing, the more likely they are to drink, or if they are already drinking, to drink more."

In a 2012 survey conducted by BAPC, over 50% of the respondents reported that tobacco should be limited to displays behind the counter and that alcohol advertisement should be limited in some way. Nearly half reported that tobacco and alcohol advertising should not be allowed anywhere outside a store. Approximately 85% respondents reported that they would like to see store owners voluntarily decrease the number of tobacco and alcohol ads/displays in their stores.

There are many ways that customers can encourage retail stores to become healthier retailers; purchase healthy products that are offered, especially fresh fruits and vegetables; make requests for healthy food products; and ask if they would consider removing or reducing alcohol and/or tobacco promotions. Our local “Healthy Retailers” are embracing this opportunity to provide a positive influence in their community. They truly appreciate having customers recognize their efforts. Please stop in to any of these stores and thank them for their commitment of providing healthy products and limiting alcohol and/or tobacco promotion - and buy a healthy snack while you are there.

Cassandra Holloway is the policy and project coordinator at the Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition (BAPC), a local nonprofit that organizes community efforts involved in the ongoing prevention and reduction of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in the Windham Southeast area. The coalition meets in Brattleboro on the second Friday of each month at 12pm, from September – June and all are welcome. To learn more about their prevention efforts or how you can contribute to their efforts visit www.BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org or call [802.257.2175](tel:802.257.2175)