

Although the mandates apply only to schools, some people have taken the initiative to apply these efforts to parks and recreation facilities as well.

“Healthy vending is a key option for communities to support the community with healthy food choices. The trick, however, is to not force people to only eat healthy, but to provide the option along with an education campaign to help people do the right thing,” Kalish explains. “For example, in office buildings we aren’t going 100-percent healthy options. Most of the vending customers in our office buildings are adults, and adults have the right to choose. Therefore, we started with 50-percent healthy and over time are moving to 100-percent ... if the market will bear it. For vending machines that kids generally use—those in our parks and centers—we only stock 100-percent healthy. Kids may not have been educated to make healthy choices, and their guardians may not be there to help them choose.”

While some are transitioning to make their vending machines healthier, others have decided to eliminate sweets altogether.

“We realized that if we put sugary options next to healthy options, kids will make the non-healthy choice almost every time,” says Jayson Swigart, facility manager at the North Boulder Recreation Center in Boulder, Colo.

He added that the rec center’s close proximity to school buildings made it difficult to resist the switch from sweets to sensible treats.

“The high school kids were just coming down in droves and draining our machines because they couldn’t get their sugary drinks in school anymore,” he says.

Swigart adds that, although revenue has decreased since junk food was swapped for healthy vending, he believes it’s the right choice.

“Parents are happy because they know they can’t control what their kids are doing all the time,” he says. “But now if they give them \$5 to grab a snack, the worst they can buy is a chocolate nut bar from Nature’s Company or something like that.”

In an effort to bring awareness to

the new options, Kalish says Arlington parks is incorporating the message into its FitArlington program, which promotes the importance of physical activity and encourages residents to make fitness and health a way of life. She adds that bringing awareness instead of forcing the issue will help in the battle of the bulge.

“One of the cool aspects of the new program ... is that the machines will be wrapped with a FitArlington logo on them to easily identify them as healthy vending. And what’s more, the private facilities can use the same wrap if they choose the healthy vending line, too” she says. “So, hopefully in time, people in Arlington will be able to look over at a vending machine, see its distinctive look, and know they will have access to better choices.”

The Migration In The North

In Canada, similar guidelines were adopted in September 2008 and revised in 2010. Known as the School Food Guidelines, the 36-page document also attempts to steer people to make healthier food choices and limit foods high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt.

Lisa Bealle, recreation programmer in North Vancouver, says the Harry Jerome Community Recreation Centre made the switch to healthy vending 3 years ago, and the transition was met with mixed results.

“Some people still don’t like it, but the response has been more positive than negative,” she says. “Of course, we work across the street from a Chevron [gas station], so they can still go buy a chocolate bar if they wanted to.”

Bealle adds she would like to see others in “private industry” convert to healthier alternatives in order to reinforce the message that snacks don’t have to have empty calories.

“I’m so used to the healthy choices it almost shocks me to see a real vending machine anymore.” **PRB**

Christine Schaffran is the editor-in-chief for PRB. Reach her at editor@northstarpubs.com.

To comment on this article, log on to www.parksandrecbusiness.com



Small Steps For Healthier Choices

Vending machines don’t have to have company logos on the side that promote healthy food in order to dispense sensible selections. Ask your local vendor to provide the healthier options:

- Sun Chips Harvest Cheddar
- David Sunflower Seeds
- Baked Doritos Nacho Cheese
- Sun Chips Garden Salsa
- CheX Mix Traditional
- Act II Popcorn Lite Butter
- Braids Holiday Pretzels
- Welch’s Fruit Snacks
- Quaker Instant Oatmeal
- Dole Tropical Fruit Salad
- Dole Peach Slices
- Dannon Cherry Yogurt 99% Fat Free
- Dippin’ Stix Carrots and Ranch
- Deja Blue Water
- Kellogg’s Corn Flakes
- Kellogg’s Rice Krispies
- Kellogg’s Smart Start Cereal
- Nature Valley-Oat/Honey Granola Bar
- Nutri-Grain Bar Apple Cinn.
- Nutri-Grain Bar Strawberry
- Kars Sweet and Salty Mix
- Kars Salted Peanuts
- Zoo Animal Crackers
- Planters Trail Mix
- Pop-Tart Brown Sugar and Cinnamon
- Pop-Tart Strawberry
- Propel Fitness Water

