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New program makes shopping for healthy foods easier

Shopping for healthy food in Milan just got easier. A new program at Richardson's Supermarket started this week. Special labels on the shelves in the store read "Thumbs Up!" to let shoppers know what selections meet healthy food criteria.

An informational flyer is being placed in grocery bags to help people learn about the program. The flyer includes helpful hints about how to add more healthy foods to what shoppers use every day, plus two delicious recipes that use Thumbs Up! foods.

Thumbs Up! was developed by Canyon Ranch Institute and members of the team that is presenting the Canyon Ranch Institute Life Enhancement Program (CRI LEP) in Sullivan County. Sullivan County Memorial Hospital CEO Amy Michael is enthusiastic about Thumbs Up! "This is a way for everyone in Sullivan County to get involved in making more healthy choices. CRI LEP graduates will recognize that Thumbs Up! foods are the kinds of foods they learned about in their classes, and people who have not yet been in the program can now benefit, too."

Foods with the Thumbs Up! label are whole foods and some packaged and canned foods that do not contain artificial ingredients, high fructose corn syrup, or unhealthy dietary fats. At Richardson's, shoppers can find many foods with the Thumbs Up! label, including pancake mixes, meats without nitrites and nitrates, and bread products. Whole foods, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and olive oil, also earn the Thumbs Up! label.

Mary Updyke, R.D., L.D., C.D.E., who is a consulting dietitian at Sullivan County Memorial Hospital and a CRI LEP in Sullivan County team member, says the Thumbs Up! program is a way to make healthy eating easier. "By looking for the green Thumbs Up! logo on shelves, shoppers can quickly select items that are healthy, without having to take the time to read and interpret ingredient labels."



The team of the Canyon Ranch Institute Life Enhancement Program in Sullivan County discusses healthy food choices at Richardson's Supermarket.

Christine L. Sardo, M.P.H., R.D., a nutritionist and a director at Canyon Ranch Institute, developed the concept and the criteria for Thumbs Up! with Mary Updyke. "The Thumbs Up! program is intended to provide convenience and confidence for people who want to make healthy food choices for themselves and their families. This program is one part of working with people throughout Sullivan County to help advance health literacy of this community."

Thumbs Up! is made possible by Sullivan County Memorial Hospital and the non-profit Canyon Ranch Institute, which is led by the 17th Surgeon General of the United States, Richard H. Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., FACS. Terri Lynn Richardson, co-owner of Richardson's Supermarket and a 2010 graduate of the CRI LEP in Sullivan County, has been instrumental in bringing Thumbs Up! to Milan. Terri Lynn is receiving no funding for hosting the program at the supermarket she owns with her husband David, who is also a CRI LEP graduate.

Three groups of Sullivan County residents have now completed the 12-week CRI LEP, which is based on a program that started over 20 years ago at Canyon Ranch Resort in Tucson, Ariz. CRI LEP takes an integrative approach to improving health and health literacy with interactive classes and activities, one-on-one coaching, cooking demonstrations, and shopping excursions. The goals of the CRI LEP in Sullivan County are to help people advance health literacy, improve nutrition, increase physical activity, manage stress, and prevent chronic disease. Overall, participants in the program report they have lost weight, are exercising more, feel better about their lives, have lowered their blood pressure, and know more about how to be healthy.

Funding for Thumbs Up! is provided in whole by the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH), The Missouri Foundation for Health is a philanthropic organization whose vision is to improve the health of the people in the communities it serves." The CRI LEP in Sullivan County is one of 26 health literacy demonstration projects overseen by the non-profit Health Literacy Missouri that is also funded by MFH.

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