



*Central California*  
**REGIONAL OBESITY  
PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Healthy Environments • Healthy Choices • Healthy People

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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## **Bridging the “healthy food gap”: Increasing healthy food through corner store conversions**



As the healthy food gap between socioeconomic groups continues to grow in the “land of plenty,” creative and innovative solutions are needed to help bridge this divide. Located within Kings County, in the small town of Kettleman City, residents struggle to access fresh, affordable and local produce. The town is home to just over 1,500 residents, but its lack of even one grocery

store makes it a food desert.

An innovative approach is under way in Kettleman City to transform a small mini market into an environment that offers fresh produce and healthier food options to its customers. This approach is known as a “corner store conversion” or “market makeover.”

“Much of our eating habits and health conditions are shaped by our environment,” explained Juan Ibarra, capacity building specialist for Kings County CCROPP. “In order for the healthy choice to be the easy choice, our community needs better public policies and business practices to drive this effort,” he added.

Ibarra and Kettleman City community members will **hold a corner store conversion kick-off event on Sunday, Oct. 18 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Hla Hla Market** (373 Brown Ave. in Kettleman City on Highway 41, just east of Interstate 5).

Youth and community volunteers will be painting the store, removing marketing and advertising items that promote unhealthy food or beverages and displaying signage for fresh fruits and vegetables now being offered at the Hla Hla Market.

The Central Valley Health Network will offer healthy food demonstrations to community members who visit the market during the conversion event.

The corner store project grew out of a community need and is supported by the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) at California State University, Fresno.

“Research shows that community members are more likely to eat local, healthy fruits and vegetables when they’re available in close proximity and are affordable,” said Genoveva Islas-Hooker, regional program coordinator for CCROPP.

For more information, please contact Brandie Banks-Bey at 559.228.2144 or 559.994.3189.

*The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP) is the Central California Public Health Partnership’s initiative to create environments that support healthy eating and active living in the San Joaquin Valley. The regional obesity prevention program is administered by the Central California Center for Health and Human Services and is housed under the College of Health and Human Services at California State University, Fresno. CCROPP is funded by The California Endowment. Visit [www.ccropp.org](http://www.ccropp.org) for additional information.*

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