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The Health Advisor

By Brooke Bennett

Changing certain behaviors, such as the way people eat, is like chipping away at a rock one tiny piece at a time. Here in the Bronx, where 27% of residents are obese, the rock is beginning to crumble as people are becoming aware of the connection between food and health. Residents here are already too familiar with the devastating health, social and economic effects that high obesity rates can have on a community. Many residents and business owners are now committed to making some major changes to help improve the health of the Bronx. In fact, eleven restaurants and five bodegas located in the Tremont and Highbridge/Morrisania neighborhoods are demonstrating their commitment to health through participation in two programs – Bronx Health REACH and Bronx Healthy Hearts.

A common mission of these two programs is to increase access to healthier foods in the community. Poor eating habits cannot change if healthy options are not available. Restaurants participating in the Bronx Healthy Hearts program highlight and promote their healthier menu items. Customers who want to make healthier food choices when dining out are able to do so with guidance from special menus and posters at these restaurants. Bodegas working with Bronx Health REACH commit to consistently stock and highlight items such as low fat milk and healthier snack options for kids. All participating stores are located near an elementary school and target their health messages to the children who shop there for snacks before and after school. Teaching children about making healthier food choices when they are young can help shape their eating habits for life.

Come celebrate the restaurants and bodegas working hard to make your community a healthier place. Join us for the 2006 Bronx Food Festival (October 23rd – 27th) and try some free samples of healthier foods. Look for the ad in this issue of the Highbridge Horizon for the location and schedule of events. You can also call Bronx Health REACH / Bronx Healthy Hearts (718-588-1235) for a list of participating restaurants and bodegas.

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