

# Westerlund joins initiative to increase rural access to fresh fruit and vegetables

[messagingmedia.co/aitkin/news/business/westerlund-joins-initiative-to-increase-rural-access-to-fresh-fruit/article\\_563a2c1e-fd88-11e8-a773-cf0d8be5772b.html](https://messagingmedia.co/aitkin/news/business/westerlund-joins-initiative-to-increase-rural-access-to-fresh-fruit/article_563a2c1e-fd88-11e8-a773-cf0d8be5772b.html)



## Good Food Sold Here

[View all 2 images in gallery.](#)

Laurie Westerlund is co-owner of Westerlund Cenex on Highway 47 in Malmo.

Posted: Thursday, December 13, 2018 5:00 am

By Lynn Mizner |

- Posted on Dec 13, 2018

by Lynn Mizner

The *Good Food Sold Here* partnership is a voluntary program for small stores across Minnesota that aims to increase access to healthy foods and beverages. The program prioritizes stores that are near schools and community centers or are in residential areas with limited access to grocery stores.

Westerlund's Cenex in Malmo recently applied to become a *Good Food Sold Here* business.

"A 'grocery gap' is felt by many Minnesotans, with nearly half (49 percent), reporting that not having a store nearby that sells healthy food impacts what they eat," said Aitkin County's Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) coordinator Hannah Colby. Colby shared that too many Minnesotans either cannot find fresh fruits and vegetables near their homes, or what they can find is limited and expensive.

Roughly 235,000 Minnesotans live more than 10 miles away from a large grocery store or a supermarket, which means some may have to rely on gas stations and corner stores for their everyday needs. Across Minnesota, stores are working with their local Public Health offices and SHIP through the Minnesota Department of Health, to support the *Good Food Sold Here* partnership.

"We're supporting this initiative to help increase access to healthy foods in our community" said Westerlund's Cenex store co-owner, Laurie Westerlund. As a *Good Food Sold Here* store, we are receiving technical assistance and support from Aitkin County Public Health that will help support merchandising healthy foods and beverages. Assistance includes advice and guidance on how to stock and display healthy foods, market research to understand and stock items customers want and developing promotional materials to highlight healthy foods.

"The more we can support healthy food options, the healthier our residents' choices can be. Thanks to a partnership with Aitkin County Public Health, we have expanded our selection of fresh fruits and vegetables and now have a produce display table in our store," said Westerlund. Not only did the store expand its selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, it now also sells more healthy beverage and snack options.

"Three out of four shoppers in the U.S. are looking for quick, tasty foods that will help keep them healthy," said Colby. The store has also made a new change by placing a "Grab -N-Go" cooler in the front of the store which is stocked with healthier convenience options for customers. The *Good Food Sold Here* logo helps consumers find healthy options at participating stores.

"Everyone seems to notice the change and appreciates the new options," said Westerlund.

### **Why does stocking healthy food matter?**

- Communities are less likely to experience chronic health problems, like diabetes, hypertension and high blood pressure, if more healthy foods and beverages are available and sold.

- Nine out of 10 Americans snack daily. How snacks affect health is an important consideration for most people, according to the Hartman Group report, *Eating Occasions Compass*.

- Produce sales at convenience stores in the U.S. are increasing, based on a 2014 report by the Hartman Group, *Convenience Stores and the 'Fresh' Opportunity*.

- [Discuss](#)

- [Print](#)

Posted in [Business](#) on *Thursday, December 13, 2018 5:00 am*.