Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:

Strengthen and sustain a partnership between the Lindsay Heights Healthy Corner Stores Initiative, the Milwaukee Health Department and MCW that promotes healthy food access

The project strongly aligned with the Lindsay Heights Quality of Life Plan, which identified increasing healthy food access as one of eight key priorities. Throughout the project period, partners engaged in activities to support cross-sector collaboration at Walnut Way, an integral partner in the Quality of Life Plan.

Assess the barriers and incentives for Milwaukee corner store owners to stock healthier food inventory

With the addition of two new corner stores in 2014, partners conducted interviews with store owners to continue to improve the understanding of barriers and facilitators to healthy food access. Key findings from interviews and surveys of consumer shopping habits as well as a review of food inspection and neighborhood services policies informed project planning and implementation.

Conduct and evaluate demonstration projects in three corner stores utilizing distribution, infrastructure and marketing strategies

Each participating store owner acquired equipment for store infrastructure improvements and worked to expand healthy food options throughout the project period. Partners reached over 1100 people through community outreach activities, including COA Family Fun Nights, the youth Food Justice Training series and cooking demonstrations at Fondy Food Market. Project evaluation included assessment of store inventory through interviews and a produce photo journal, the project partnership, youth programming and food demonstrations.

Provide systematic evidence of best practices to promote healthy food access that maximizes economic health benefits

Partners shared project findings with the community through a final project summary report. Project outcomes also informed a grant submission to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to increase the number of urban gardens in Milwaukee and provide technical assistance to corner stores seeking to increase fresh produce sales.

Project Highlight:

Store owners reported a number of benefits experienced associated with their participation in the project, including:

- Gained skills in storing and displaying fresh produce
- Connected with community members and gained customers by selling produce
- Increased knowledge of fresh produce among customers
- Acquired business development resources

Store owners also identified additional challenges experienced and suggestions for future continued success of providing healthy food options at corner stores:

- Increasing marketing in the neighborhood
- Improving store access to produce
- Increasing technical assistance from the health department
- Assisting with maintenance of storage coolers
- Ensuring stores can process WIC payments for produce

Dissemination:

- Poster presentation at the American Public Health Association annual conference (November 2013)
- Presentation at the Wisconsin Local Food Summit conference (January-February 2014)
- Poster presentation at the Community Campus Partnerships for Health annual conference (May 2014)

Project Partners:

- Lindsay Heights Neighborhood Health Alliance
- Milwaukee Health Department
- Walnut Way Conservation Corp
- MCW Department of Family and Community Medicine