PRESS RELEASE

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Local Markets Help Residents Make Half Their Plates Fruits and Vegetables

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Small markets in south Santa Rosa are making healthy changes for a healthier community as part of the Healthy Food Outlet Project, a joint project of the Sonoma County Department of Health Services and Community Activity and Nutrition Coalition. Over the past few months, Lola’s Markets, Maria’s Market, Mekong Market, Santa Rosa Liquor and Deli, Super Latino Market, and Tarasco Market have increased their selection of fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables available to customers. The markets are working to make it easier for residents in the south Santa Rosa area to fill half their plates with fruits and vegetables, a key message of the nationwide Choose My Plate campaign.

Customers who visit the markets will begin to see signs promoting the sale of fruits and vegetables through programs like Harvest of the Month. Harvest of the Month highlights a different California grown fruit or vegetable each month. Customers can identify the monthly produce by looking for the Harvest of the Month logo in the fresh, canned and frozen produce section of the markets.

Participating markets have also committed to support the ‘half your plate’ goal among residents receiving food assistance. Currently, CalFresh participants can use their benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables at all markets, and WIC participants can use their benefits at Lola’s Markets, Maria’s Market, Santa Rosa Liquor and Deli, and Tarasco Market.

“We’re participating in the Healthy Food Outlet Project because we want to promote health,” said Raquel Campos, co-owner of Super Latino Market. “The health of our nation is in jeopardy because of obesity. Any little bit we do will hopefully help.”

Over the next few months, all markets participating in the Healthy Food Outlet Project will continue to make healthy changes, including the addition of a Smart Snack Zone to promote healthier snacking. Each store is asking customers to visit their stores and request healthier products they would like to see carried. The goal is to make healthier choices the easy choice for customers.

“Increasing access to healthier food for all Sonoma County residents is an important approach to improving community health,” said Efren Carrillo, 5th District Supervisor. “And
by working with small markets we continue to strengthen our local economy which can lead to job retention and creation.”

Customers wanting additional information about building a healthy meal containing half their plate of fruits and vegetables can visit the Choose My Plate website at www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups. The website provides information on recommended daily amounts of fruits and vegetables, health benefits and nutrients, and tips to help you eat more fruits and vegetables. Choose My Plate is part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! Initiative, which is dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, so that children born today will grow up healthier and able to pursue their dreams.

Interviews are available with program staff, volunteers, and food outlet owners/managers.

About the Healthy Food Outlet Project

Sonoma County’s Healthy Food Outlet Project was created to help food outlets (grocery stores, supermarkets, and small markets) provide customers with healthy food options while at the same time helping spur business growth in the community. The project seeks to establish a standard store quality threshold based on the availability and quality of fresh produce, healthy food, and advertising in stores. The Healthy Food Outlet Project was adopted in 2009 by the Community Activity and Nutrition Coalition of Sonoma County (http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/meetings/canc.asp) and is endorsed by Health Action (www.sonomahealthaction.org), a cross-sector coalition of community leaders and partners convened by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services as a catalyst for local action to create a healthy community. The project is currently being implemented in 15 food outlets in Monte Rio, Guerneville, Fetters Hot Springs and south Santa Rosa, and is funded by grants from the Kaiser Permanente’s Healthy Eating and Active Living Program and the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program.