

idea corner

PPOPP=Education for Supermarket Shoppers

Shopping for groceries means more than buying food. It's also making nutritious purchases that are compatible with personal resources. PPOPP (Pilot Point of Purchase Program), directed by an Iowa State University (ISU) Extension nutritionist, placed consultants in 18 grocery stores on a regular basis over a 8-week period. They discussed problems with over 10,000 shoppers during their 1,250 hours of in-store appearances. In addition, over 31,000 specially prepared leaflets were distributed.

Store managers and county Extension home economists interviewed unemployed and underemployed home economics graduates for the consultant positions. Each received training and materials from Extension personnel. They were paid by the stores.

The consultant's corner featured a background display provided by ISU plus a worktable provided by the store. Weekly topics were highlighted by posters, "facts about" leaflets, and demonstrations or audience-participation activities.

Of the eight weekly topics, the most popular were fruit, nutritious snacks, and vegetables. Least popular was protein alternatives. As a matter of fact, many consultants received complaints from local beef, pork, and poultry producers because they felt the consultants were discouraging the use of meat products. Other topics included ham, labels, low-calorie foods, and beef.

Most home economists and store managers called the program a success. Home economists felt they'd reached a larger audience than would be possible with other means of face-to-face contact. The amount of satisfaction expressed by store managers seemed directly related to the amount of time and enthusiasm they devoted to the project and to their feelings about the job done by the consultant.

A successful program needs:

1. Consultants who are outgoing, enthusiastic, and mature.
2. Carefully chosen location for the consultation corner. They get lost in low-traffic areas. Shoppers may feel too rushed to stop in high-traffic areas.
3. Publicity that emphasizes the role of the consultant as a resource person and one who answers questions. Many consultants felt

they were ignored because shoppers thought they were trying to sell something. Use in-store posters as well as mass media for publicity.

4. Audience-participation activities or eye-catching displays. If handouts are used, they should be clearly distinguishable from

week to week. A change in ink color—even with different illustrations—isn't enough to distinguish them in the consumers' minds, if the paper color remains the same.

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Consultant's corners were designed to fit the end of a store aisle.