

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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N.G.A. Supports Health Department's Focus on Calories

WASHINGTON — A new study from HHS' Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that poor diet and lack of activity are currently poised to become the leading preventable cause of death. N.G.A. President and CEO Thomas Zaucha said that N.G.A. has been forefront in addressing the obesity crisis. In October 2004, N.G.A., in conjunction with the Food Industry Center from the University of Minnesota, hosted "Steps to Healthy Living: Starts With Good Lifestyle Habits" conference. During the recent N.G.A. convention, N.G.A. encouraged retailers to promote healthy living by inviting a series of keynote speakers such as Dr. Ornish and Dr. Cooper who spoke about ways to create a healthier consumer. Dr. James Hill, the Director of Human Nutrition at the University of Colorado discussed the program "America on the Move" which encourages people to begin walking more in order to burn more calories. The Annual Convention also contained workshops and concept show floor demonstrations focused on natural and health foods as well as the retailer's role in healthy living.

On March 12, 2004 the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) called on manufacturers to improve nutrition labels in order that consumers can better accomplish their health and nutrition goals. N.G.A. supports the HHS and FDA recommendations and understands that counting calories is equally important as exercise for people trying to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Zaucha noted, "The new recommendations reflect a good balance between government programs and personal responsibility."

The main focus of the administration's plan is to educate the consumer on the importance of balancing calorie intake and energy expenditures. According to HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson some recommendations made by the HHS and FDA include ensuring food labels accurately portray serving sizes, the development of foods that are healthier and low in calories, and educating consumers about the importance of calorie counting.

Zaucha recommends that community-focused independent retailers continue to promote programs that increase physical activity for families, schools, and communities such as "America on the Move." Additionally Zaucha stated, "Retailers should be more aggressive in their promotion of healthy eating choices with the basic message calories and exercise count. Consumers indicate that they are looking for healthier and low calorie foods, retailers therefore have the opportunity to expand categories such as produce or natural and organic foods to meet customer needs."

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats.

Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family and others are employee owned. Independents are the true “entrepreneurs” of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers, state grocers associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.