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PRESS RELEASE

Capital Roots Launches Smart Vending Program

New healthier snack options coming to Capital Region

ALBANY, N.Y. - Capital Roots announced the launch of the organization's new Smart Vending program, an innovative food access solution that provides the information and opportunities for Capital Region residents and employees to purchase healthier snack options on the go.

The announcement took place August 29 at the Arbor Hill/West Hill branch of Albany Public Library, one of the locations now carrying healthy snack alternatives through the Smart Vending program.

"One of the challenges with typical vending machines is that they don't allow consumers to truly access information in order to make informed decisions on what to eat," said Amy Klein, Chief Executive Officer at Capital Roots. "Smart Vending is our chance to combat this issue and allow our neighbors the chance to make educated decisions about their snacking."

Smart Vending snack options include items such as granola bars, apple chips, fruit rope, and coconut water, and Capital Roots is partnering with three local healthy food-focused vending companies — HealthyMe Living, New Leaf Group, and Delicious Healthy Vending — to implement the program in the Capital Region. Utilizing the partnerships with these three vendors, Capital Roots is able to introduce Smart Vending into businesses and community-based organizations of all sizes.

"We chose to partner with these three companies because each focuses on a variety of vending site sizes and allows us the opportunity to offer interested businesses and organizations options when it comes to their desired healthy snacking structure," Klein said. "Capital Roots will act as the facilitator between our healthy vending partners and interested Smart Vending locations."

Current Smart Vending locations include the Arbor Hill/West Hill and Howe branches of Albany Public Library as well as Albany Leadership Charter High School for Girls, with more expected to be introduced throughout the rest of 2017. Klein said the goal is to introduce 50 new locations to the program.

Albany City Mayor Kathy Sheehan, who joined Klein at the launch, said the program is an opportunity for families to have healthier snacking options.

“It is essential for our children to have easy access to affordable, healthy snacks. The Smart Vending program is a wonderful opportunity for children and families to take advantage of these healthy options,” said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan. “Thank you to Capital Roots for launching this initiative, and to the locally-owned vending partners and community-based organizations who are working to make this program a success.”

Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy, who also attended the launch, said the program is offering better options for the community.

“The CDC says one in every five school-aged children is obese, and we know that two causes of obesity can be poor diets and a lack of physical activity,” McCoy said. “It’s nice to see these new vending machines being offered at our public facilities to encourage a healthier diet, and I want to thank Capital Roots for all their work to get people interested in eating better, good nutrition and education.”

Businesses and community organizations looking to host Smart Vending can include those with current machines and those looking to introduce vending machines into their offices and community spaces for the first time. Capital Roots works with its three vending partners to bring in new machines with healthier options and will work with pre-existing machines to make minor modifications to encourage smarter snacking, such as bringing water to eye level, swapping sugary drinks and snacks for low-sugar choices, and finding creative alternatives for traditionally vended treats. The organization is additionally providing free marketing and educational materials to all Smart Vending locations.

Smart Vending joins 12 other Capital Roots programs focused on food access and education in the region. The program is a hybrid of both of these aspects of the organization’s work, providing not only access to healthier food options but educational materials about what’s inside.

“Smart Vending is once again about leveling the playing field for our constituents,” Klein said, “and ensuring they have all the tools necessary to eat well.”

Businesses and community-based organizations interested in bringing Smart Vending through its doors can email healthyretail@capitalroots.org.

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Capital Roots is a 42-year-old nonprofit organization that nourishes healthy communities with more than 52 Community Gardens, the Veggie Mobile®, Healthy Stores, the Produce Project, Squash Hunger and more. Capital Roots is headquartered at the Urban Grow Center, a regional food hub focused on urban agriculture and produce distribution to four counties, enabling Capital Roots to triple our ability to deliver fresh food and services to underserved neighborhoods and low-income families. Learn more at www.capitalroots.org.
