



# Healthy Food Access For All Minnesotans



## Good Food Access Program Grant Recipient Profile

### D & R GROCERY Oklee, Minnesota

New refrigeration units help serve the grocery needs of small-town residents

Deb Sherman, the owner of D & R Grocery in Oklee, Minn., is excited about the store's new freezer, which she was able to buy thanks to the Minnesota Good Food Access Fund. "We're so happy for it. It's just so bright, and people can notice the food right away," she says. "I think that people buy those items more - it's like, oh! I didn't know you have that here!"

The fund also allowed three new compressors to be installed on D & R's existing refrigeration units. And while the new compressors aren't as noticeable to customers as the freezer, "we have taken people back there to show what was given to us," says Deb enthusiastically.



*"I'm sure that just about every small town in any area would be more than grateful to have the extra support from the state ... It is a big eye opener how much good this program can do for small town grocery stores."*

According to Deb, the grant keeps the equipment running, and well-running equipment keeps the store going. "If you can't keep your milk and eggs chilled and frozen food frozen, you can't afford to keep replacing the products."

Deb has seen the high cost of repairs sink other small grocery stores in the area, damaging the communities where they were located.



*This new freezer in the D & R Grocery store is a welcome site for local Oklee, Minn. residents that can now purchase healthy, colorful frozen fruits and vegetables in town.*

"If the grocery goes, then the people go and that impacts all of the local businesses," she says.

Ensuring that D & R Grocery can stick around also helps guarantee that people in Oklee and the surrounding area can access nutritious foods. The next closest grocery store is a 20-minute drive away. But, as Deb explains, "We have a lot of people here who don't drive, including elderly folks and younger ones who never got a license and those who don't want to drive in bad weather when it's hard to get out of town."

Deb loves what she does and would love to see the Good Food Access Fund continue to provide support to other small groceries like hers. "I'm sure that just about every small town in any area would be more than grateful to have the extra support from the state to help keep their business going," she says. "It is a big eye opener how much good this fund can do for small town grocery stores."



### ABOUT THE GOOD FOOD ACCESS PROGRAM

Recognizing the need for food access solutions in Minnesota, the American Heart Association, together with local and state coalition partners, advocated for the creation of the Good Food Access Program within the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in 2016. The program provides grants, loans and technical assistance to local enterprises for innovative food access solutions.

Learn more at [www.mnhealthykids.org](http://www.mnhealthykids.org)

For more information and to get involved, contact Lorna Schmidt // [Lorna.Schmidt@heart.org](mailto:Lorna.Schmidt@heart.org)