**Research:**

The purpose of this pilot study was to determine the usefulness of the Healthy Eating Index (HEI) instrument in evaluating food shelves. The HEI instrument was used to characterize the nutritional quality of foods available. Researchers visited six urban and rural food shelves July–October 2012. Four of the six food shelves served over 670 people per week. A one day “snapshot” inventory of all foods available in food shelves was recorded with pictures. Inventories averaged 145 unique food items and ranged from 75 to 215 foods. The foods in the inventory were then matched up with a food code and a score was generated based on the nutritional quality of the foods. Below is a display of the findings.

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### Nutrition Facts

|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|------|---------|---------|-------------------|-------------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|------|

- Total Solid Fat: △
- Total Fat: △
- Saturated Fats: ✅
- Oils: △
- Cholest: ✅
- Sodium: ●
- Total Carbohydrate: △
- Added Sugars: △
- Protein: ✅
- Vitamin A: ✅
- Vitamin C: ✅
- Calcium: ✅
- Iron: ✅

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.*

[Twin Cities Area Food Shelf Healthy Eating Index Analysis: A Pilot Study](How healthy are the foods available in Twin Cities Area food shelves?)

**How healthy are the foods available in Twin Cities Area food shelves?**

A Partnership among Greater Twin Cities United Way, Twin Cities Hunger Initiative and University of Minnesota
**Healthy Eating Index: Findings and Recommendations**

**Key Findings: HEI Instrument Ratings**

On average, food shelves scored 67 out of 100. A higher score is a better score.

- **Calorie from solid fat, alcohol and added sugar**: 16.1
- **Meat and Beans**: 7.9
- **Milk**: 3
- **Oils**: 6.8
- **Saturated Fats**: 9.1
- **Sodium**: 1.1
- **Whole Grains**: 2.3
- **Total Fruit**: 3
- **Whole Fruit**: 4.4
- **Total Veggies**: 4.5
- **Green & orange veggies & beans**: 3.6
- **Total Grains**: 4.9

**Key Recommendations:**

Based upon the findings from this study, key recommendations include:

- Talk to vendors and donors about the need for more whole grains and fewer white breads, sweets and salty snacks.
- Replace white/enriched grains with whole grains to improve sodium scores.
- Strive for a variety. Variety will reach the best HEI score.
- Add milk and dairy products.

"More than 8,200 people a day seek assistance from food shelves in Minnesota; 40% are children."

Jill Martinez, Communications Manager Hunger Solutions Minnesota

"Everybody should have a right to equal access and healthy foods. If vulnerable people rely on food systems, we need to advocate for these people give them healthy choices."

Barbara Thell,
Director of Minnesota FoodShare at Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches

**more information: msnanney@umn.edu (Dr. Susie Nanney, Principal Investigator)**