



Produce and healthy snacks get top billing in the new Village Market located in the New Columbia Neighborhood of north Portland.

Village Market Success

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under the age of 18-years-old.

"It's the people's store," said Mychal Tetteh, project manager of the market.

Recognizing the need for affordable food and market options for residents of the New Columbia, St. Johns Woods and Tamarack neighborhoods, residents joined together, with the support of Janus Youth Programs staff and volunteers, Home Forward, and local and national business consultants to make the market a success. "Before the market was here, there wasn't any produce between Interstate and St. Johns," said Tetteh. "There was certainly a produce gap, but there was also a full-service grocery gap in the neighborhood. So we are filling that too."

The goal, he said, is to build a strong community, while simultaneously increasing access to a healthier lifestyle.

Throughout the day, customers can purchase custom made deli sandwiches and other affordable options, including \$1 fresh fruit smoothies. "Our mission is to deliver quality fresh, affordable groceries," he said.

Tetteh added, that it is important to note what the store doesn't carry, as much as it is to appreciate what they do. Village Market does not carry any tobacco products or alcoholic beverages, and although often the best way for a business to make their money, the store also does not carry lotto tickets, he said.

The store also employs people from the neighborhood, and even people who live in the same build-

ing as the market, which has served over 10,000 customers, created over 20 employment opportunities, and attracted over 140 volunteers.

The inside walls are decorating with colorful murals, donated and worked on by residents to give the store local community flavor. "So far we have been growing every month," Tetteh said. "And for being a year in, we are doing really well."

12-months later, he said the question of how to get to the next level of sustainability currently interests him the most. "We are a not for profit enterprise, but to be self sufficient we can't throw money away," he said.

"We want to be a self sustaining institution that reflects the needs of the community and also provides employment opportunities for those who are out of work."

According to Tetteh, Village Market works with a variety of organizations and programs to involve as many people who want to be a part of the project, including staff from the workforce development program, senior's program and the steps to success program.

Daborah Mayom, a volunteer with Village Market, stopped in the store last week to purchase produce and some meat for the following night's dinner.

Although busy with school, Mayom said she always finds the time to volunteer with Village Market, which rests in the neighborhood she lives. "I love this store," she said. "And I Love to volunteer all the time. It is good for me, and it is fun."

Medina Negatu, a resident of



PHOTOS BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Village Market Project Manager Mychal Tetteh greets Daborah Mayom, one of the non-profit store's volunteers and customers.

the community, has been a volunteer with Village Market since opening day. "We have more healthy options and more activi-

ties to get involved in," she said during a recent health fair held for north Portland residents. "A lot of people in this community don't

know much about health and healthy food options."

But having Village Market here is like having a health fair every day, said Tetteh, who hopes more Portlanders will learn about what their store has to offer the city.

The top three ways to support both the market and healthy lifestyles is to shop at Village market, volunteer time and spread the word, he added. "We are Portland's best kept secret," he said.

To celebrate the one year anniversary of the market, everyone is welcome to an event will be held on Monday, May 28 to celebrate the Village Market and their success in providing healthy food options to local residents that are affordable and convenient.

"We want to get the broader Portland community to know where and why it is important for them to shop here," said Tetteh. "We want them to know they can shop their ideals and shop their values in a way they can't shop anywhere else."

For more information about Village Market or how to become involved, visit villagegardens.org.



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