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Food Lion launched food pharmacy pilot program

Food Lion and Novant Health are collaborating to launch a food pharmacy pilot program at Novant Health New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington, NC.

The pilot program provides qualified participants access to nutritious food and encourages them to make healthy lifestyle choices to achieve sustained health. Throughout the two-year pilot program, Food Lion will distribute nearly 3,000 boxes that contain nutritious food. Qualified patients will be determined, in part, through assessments by Novant Health dietitians and team members.

“This partnership with Novant Health is an opportunity to help our neighbors eat healthier by using food as medicine,” said Matt Yates, vice president of brand strategy for Food Lion. “Through the food pharmacy program, we are providing our neighbors with nutritious food that helps them manage chronic illnesses and helps them thrive, setting them up for success.”

At New Hanover Regional Medical Center, dietitians assess patients who are at risk for malnutrition, and part of that assessment also screens for food insecurity. Patients facing food insecurity are eligible to receive a food pharmacy box upon discharge.

Using the proprietary Guiding Stars system, the food pharmacy box provides presorted food items as well as information about Food Lion’s nutritious products and the Guiding Stars system. Easy to understand, Guiding Stars was introduced in 2006 and includes ratings on products and shelf labels at all Food Lion stores. The three-star rating system is simple: one star for good, two for better and three stars for the best nutritional value. The rating system makes it easier and quicker to identify the item’s nutritional value and for patients to follow their physician-prescribed dietary guidelines.

“We are so grateful to Food Lion for supporting our vision for a food pharmacy that will benefit patients in need and for their investment in this program that improves health outcomes for individuals in our hospitals and clinics, many that have a chronic disease and identify as food insecure,” said Schorr Davis, executive director of the New Hanover Regional Medical Center Foundation. “Partnerships like this help us further deliver on our mission to improve the health of our communities.”

In addition, Food Lion donated the equivalent of 1,800 meals of the same product used in the food pharmacy boxes to the Food Bank of Central and Eastern North Carolina, Wilmington branch, supporting New Hanover County neighbors to achieve their health and nutrition goals.

Photo: Jimmy Jones, Food Lion's director of operations for the Wilmington region speaks on behalf of the omnichannel retailer regarding its collaboration with Novant Health.