



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Marin Youth Still Targeted by Tobacco, Alcohol Ads**

*Statewide survey shows addictive products edge out healthy alternatives*

**San Rafael, CA** – A statewide review of tobacco, alcohol and food products in community stores shows unhealthy products edge out healthier ones, and Marin retailers near schools sell addictive products aimed at youth.

“Healthy retail is an important part of community health” says Dr. Matt Willis, Marin County Public Health Officer. “When it comes to health, studies are clear that the choices we make are strongly influenced by what’s offered and by how and where it’s offered.”

The [2016 Healthy Stores Healthy Communities \(HSHC\) Retail Survey](#) is a 10-year statewide study of 7,100 stores in all 58 California counties including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience and liquor stores as well as tobacco-only stores. The results will help inform health officials and community leaders as they try to improve healthy food and drink availability.

One of the most concerning survey findings is that 63 percent of stores that sell alcohol also sell so-called alcopops, which are highly concentrated alcoholic sugary beverages with a great deal of youth appeal. But not every store owner wants to carry those products. Bill Daniels, owner of the Marin-based United Markets grocery store chain, refuses to sell alcopops.

“We had alcopops on shelves for about one week,” Daniels said. “When I discovered what these products were about and whom they were targeting, these youth-friendly alcohol products were eliminated from our stores immediately.”

The study also found that electronic cigarettes are taking up more shelf space in Marin County. In 2016, 60 percent of Marin stores in the study sold e-cigarettes compared with 46 percent in 2014.

“E-cigarettes and the tobacco industry’s new flavored products threaten to reverse years of progress in protecting our kids from nicotine addiction,” said Bob Curry, Local Lead Agency Director of Marin County’s [Tobacco Related Disease Control Program](#).

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Local store owners are being influenced to sell tobacco and alcohol products with promises of huge profits.

"A sales representative for a wine and liquor supplier told me I was crazy if I didn't jump on the bandwagon," Daniels said. "The sales rep said, 'It's a huge profit center and absolutely will make you all sorts of money. Even water in warehouses is being replaced by e-cigarettes.' I am not as interested in profit as I am in health. I don't sell tobacco products and I will not sell e-cigarettes."

Not all the survey findings were discouraging. The percent of Marin stores with tobacco marketing in "kid friendly" areas such as candy or toys sections was four times lower than the state wide average of 37 percent.

"The [Smoke-Free Marin Coalition](#) has worked hard to educate storeowners about how inappropriate it is market tobacco next to candy," Curry said.

Other findings in Marin stores that concern public health officials included:

- 73 percent sell flavored tobacco products, but only 47 percent sold fresh fruits or vegetables.
- 54 percent sold cigarillos, a popular brand of "little cigars," sold individually for less than a dollar.
- percent sell milk, but 59 percent sell alcohol.
- percent sell condoms, but only 49 percent sell them on unlocked shelves, which health experts say could help prevent teen pregnancies.
- Ads for unhealthy products near schools were 44 percent in 2013 and increased to 48 percent in 2016.

"These 'training wheels' for life-long addiction are targeting our youths in stores right under our noses," said Jennie Cook, Chair of the Smoke-Free Marin Coalition. "The clever marketing for these products is not designed for anyone over 30 to even notice. We don't have unlimited money like the tobacco industry has to spend on marketing, but we sure have a lot of work ahead of us to stop these disturbing trends that snare the young and vulnerable."

For state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, please visit [www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com](http://www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com).

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