

Julie Greene's daughter, Anna (pictured here), was **born the same week** that the Guiding Stars program launched in 2006.



Guiding Stars Good Ideas provide **quick and easy tips for healthier eating** such as using hummus on a sandwich rather than mayonnaise.

# Hannaford drives change by keeping it simple

Health and wellness merchandising award recipient Hannaford paves fool-proof path to better health **BY JULIE GALLAGHER**

**T**en years after debuting the Guiding Stars shelf labeling system — whose zero, one, two or three star scale of healthfulness is easy enough for a child to follow — Hannaford Supermarkets is inspiring meaningful change via similarly easy concepts and interactions.

“They’re simple ideas that are based on the theory that we can nudge people to better health,” Julie Greene, manager of healthy living for Hannaford, told *SN*. “We’re not going to shift somebody who

is eating fast food every night to eat kale salad, but what we can do is shift people to make small changes to better-for-you choices. They may be willing to try different things that are accessible, familiar, and they may say, ‘Oh, I can do that.’”

In addition to its at-a-glance system that identifies foods that have more positive attributes than negative and assigns them a good, better or best rating with stars, Hannaford employs the Guiding Stars Good Ideas sign program that relays quick tips and easy recipes for maximizing one’s produce consumption. A sign near

bell peppers suggests, for instance, that shoppers “spoil their dinner” with chopped peppers, rather than an unhealthy snack as they hungrily prepare a meal.

In the interest of convenience, interactions with the Scarborough, Maine-based retailer’s registered dietitians are facilitated out on the floor of more than 60 stores.

While Hannaford initially emphasized classes that shoppers had to sign up for, it has since moved many of these free educational opportunities to high-traffic areas of the store so that passing shoppers

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## BEST HEALTH AND WELLNESS MERCHANDISING

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can easily join these “moving classrooms.” Sampling stations encourage similar engagement.

“People are busy and they don’t necessarily have time to make appointments and they may not feel comfortable or ready to sit down with someone and talk about their struggles,” said Greene. “We find that the most meaningful interactions with our dietitians happen on the sales floor where someone will walk in and say, ‘Oh, thanks for the samples of cinnamon apple yogurt. My spouse was just diagnosed with X and I feel lost and overwhelmed. Can you help me answer this question,’ and the dietitian will put her sign up that says, ‘Be right back,’ and she’ll take that person, sometimes literally by the hand, through the store and say, ‘Happy to help you.’”

Patients and their families seeking dietary guidance also find their way to Hannaford through the chain’s

partnerships with local healthcare providers. Diabetes support groups, for instance, sometimes move their meeting to a Hannaford store and learn about portion control and carb counting from registered dietitians.

Shoppers are also getting fit at Hannaford. One of its partnerships leverages the fitness expertise of the Capital Region YMCA, which together with Hannaford and health insurer CDPHP operates a 5,277-square-foot Healthy Living Center within Hannaford’s Albany, N.Y., store. The three-year-old center is equipped with personal lockers and showers, and offers free nutritional instruction and group exercise classes to a segment of the population that is in need of these services.

“We have been seeing very strong growth in membership at the Healthy Living Center,” said Hannaford spokesman Eric Blom. “During the last year alone, it’s grown by more than 50% in

membership and we have more than 1,000 members now. Similarly, the program offering has grown remarkably, so there are 20 core classes with most focused on wellness, and some on chronic diseases like diabetes.”

Affordable wellness carries through to Hannaford’s private brand offering and its commitment to increase the sales of store brand products that earn at least one Guiding Star at Hannaford and its sister banner Food Lion, to 45% by 2020. The banners are currently at 37%.

Hannaford’s research shows that Millennials in particular are interested in items with fewer ingredients, that are organic and are “free-from” certain attributes. Its private brand team has been working diligently to meet their needs.

**Hannaford dietitians DEMO SIMPLE RECIPES that don’t require a ton of ingredients.**



**Hannaford has found that the most meaningful interactions between shoppers and dietitians happen out on the store floor.**

“We’ve been hard at work identifying ways to source products that have more positive than negative attributes and we’ve had some great wins in this arena,” she said. “One that I was excited about, and this is a funny one, was macaroni and cheese. For so long we thought it was impossible to find a mac and cheese that would earn a star, but we were able to source one that does. It has less sodium and more positive than negative attributes. It doesn’t earn three stars, but it’s a better-for-you choice at an affordable price point.” **SN**