

Gluten Free Awareness Merchandising & Merchandising TIPS

By Debby Swoboda – July 2007

Since 1987 the Celiac Sprue Association (CSA) has observed Celiac Disease Awareness Month in October. This year, the CSA awareness campaign is focusing on improving diagnosis. You can do your part by educating the people in your community so they can be sure to visit their doctor if they detect any of the symptoms.

The CSA has a thorough handbook on its website with a wealth of information to help retailers pull off a highly effective campaign: <http://www.csaceliacs.org/documents/Final2007CeliacAwarenessMonthPacket.pdf>

Events are always a great way to celebrate, and with everything you do this month, you can include information on the many chronic conditions besides celiac disease that can benefit from a gluten free diet. These include asthma, eczema, anemia, anxiety and depression, attention deficit disorders, autism spectrum, autoimmune diseases, Crohn's disease, osteoporosis and more. Be sure to differentiate between wheat sensitivity and gluten intolerance, and train your staff to help customers understand what to look for when reading labels.

Events

Hold a cooking gluten free class, have recipes posted on end caps and other locations throughout the store. Have tastings set up at stations throughout the store for a variety of foods. Invite a local gastroenterologist to speak, followed by presentation by a nutritionist.

Go outside your store and into the community by:

- Setting up displays in libraries or at local health fairs to promote celiac disease awareness.
- Teaming up with local hospitals and pharmacies to build a celiac disease information display using leaflets available from the national CSA office. Ask if the hospital or pharmacy will allow you to leave the display up for the month of October.
- Organize a fundraiser for your local CSA chapter. Request the manual, "CSA's Fundraising for Success", from the CSA office for fundraising ideas and projects by calling toll free 877-CSA-4-CSA or emailing celiacs@csaceliacs.org

Really utilize Celiac Disease Awareness Month to get media attention. It's a growing concern for so many people, and you can position yourself and your store as your community's chief resource. If you'd like a template for a Press Release for a Wheat Free Gluten Free tasting and educational event contact me and I'd be happy to send it to you.

Grocery Department

Visit the Celiac Sprue Association Web Site for some gluten free flour formula recipes that you can post throughout your grocery department: <http://www.csaceliacs.org/recipes/FlourFormulas.php>. Gluten-free signs are making a big impact in stores. You can enhance this effort by placing shelf talkers around the store to help point out all the items that you carry to support the special needs of your community. Place them throughout the store, making them clean and simple, not too large and keeping them consistent. Again, if you contact me, I can send a printable template for shelf talkers to you.

Produce Department

See the CSA web site for delicious salad recipes that you can post, while featuring all the ingredients in one area of your produce section. Be sure to highlight corn and potatoes as two starches in the produce department that are included in a gluten free diet.

Supplement Department

Feature vitamin/mineral supplements that are gluten-free and meet 100% of the recommended daily allowances, or the daily-recommended intake (RDA or DRI). Feature specific companies such as this one that carries gluten-free multiple vitamin powders: ALL ONE/Nutritech (<http://www.all-one.com>). Request POP materials to support the company's commitment to the gluten-free health concern. Place "gluten-free" shelf talkers on products like these throughout the store to assist consumers in finding items easily.

Website and Literature

Set up a station for consumer advocacy in your store and online. Have a petition signing area where customers can gather information from different organizations and sign a petition requesting legislation to require generic drugs to disclose the presence of WBRO and other major allergens and supporting the bill, "To Improve Drug Safety and Oversight" Include information about the dietary guidelines established for the Gluten Intolerance Group® and the Celiac Disease Foundation, which are in agreement with the Gluten Free Diet guidelines published by the American Dietetic Association, October 2000.

Check-Out Area

Enclose the CSA's fact sheets as a bag stuffer.

Until next time, here's wishing you a great day! Debby

Debby link picks of the month:

www.americanceeliac.org/livingwithcd.htm

www.csaceliacs.org

www.celiaccentral.org

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