

Ahmed the owner of Food Plus Market, participants in the Healthy Corner Store Initiative.
SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks may be utilized at Food Plus Market.
414 E. Amherst Street Buffalo, NY 14215

Interviewer: Is there anything that you'd like to share about your background or history?

Ahmed: I came to the US in 1990. I've lived in Buffalo for twenty-nine years. I worked in my father's store on the West Side. I went to school at the University at Buffalo, graduating in 2000 with a degree in Business Management. I'm married and have five kids. I've been to many cities in America, but nothing like Buffalo. I love it here. I'm seriously happy, it's quiet, I have nice neighbors, the neighborhood is great, I've had no problems, and the people are really friendly.

Interviewer: How long have you had this store?

Ahmed: This is a family business, which we've had since 1991.

Interviewer: What made you want to get involved with this store and the family business?

Ahmed: I like trade. I wanted to be a merchant. This is an opportunity. After I graduated from UB I thought maybe I'll work in a bank or corporation. I went to Pennsylvania to work in a small oil company. I was going back and forth between Pennsylvania and Buffalo every weekend. Then in a year it got sold and I came back to Buffalo. At that time, I decided to stay here in Buffalo.

Interviewer: How did you get involved in the Healthy Corner Store Initiative?

Ahmed: Through our Councilmen Wyatt. It was almost three years ago. And we thought it was a really good idea for the neighborhood. There were no supermarkets in the area. We thought we could help by providing fresh fruits and vegetables in my store, making these foods more accessible for the community. Before our involvement with the initiative we used to sell basic stuff, such as tomatoes, onions, lettuce, and bananas. When they came to us and asked if we would provide more fruits and vegetables, we were open to this idea and wanted this to succeed so we could help the neighborhood. Many people in the neighborhood don't have cars to go supermarkets outside of the community. So, we are trying to bring as much produce as we can into this store. We are limited by the size of the store, but we are trying hard to make it work. And it's working fine. I would like it to work a lot better. Most of our customers, they think that a small store will have no fruits or vegetables. So, some of them go to other big stores. We've got some produce here. Hopefully it works.

Interviewer: Would you like to share your experiences with this community?

Ahmed: Yeah, we love this community. We've been here since 1991. We've never had any problems. This is a mostly family-oriented neighborhood. A lot of families here. We know everybody and they know us. It's really nice here.

Interviewer: Do you hold any special events for the community?

Ahmed: Any time Councilmen Wyatt asks us to help with an event, we always help out. We work together with him to support big events in the summer. We are also part of the Arab American Business Association. For the past two years we've shared turkeys with families in the neighborhood. Some of the events were in Martin Luther King Park last summer. We took part in two of these events. So, there are about six or seven events that we took part in last year and the year before. Most of which, is for the community here.

Interviewer: Do you have any ideas about how you would like to see your store grow in connection with the Healthy Corner Store Initiative?

Ahmed: We want the business to grow. We want to be successful. The business is okay, but more business would be better. We want more traffic to the store. We believe that if we have more varieties of produce, more people will come. So, hopefully it will work out. We hope for more advertisement from the Healthy Corner Store Coalition. So, more people can find out that we have fruits and vegetables in the store.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Ahmed: Yes, we have the Double Up Food Bucks program here as well. Customers with SNAP receive an increased value on this benefit when they utilize it for fruits and vegetables. Since we've had this program in the store, people are buying more fruits and vegetables. We've signed up a lot of people here. We find that people are using their money wisely. I think that this program is a really good idea.