**Letter to Those Buying Food or Drinks for your Organization**

Dear [\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_],

You may have heard that [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] is now a member of the Better Choices Coalition of Howard County.

**Why we joined**

A third of all children and half of all African American and Latino children born today will develop diabetes or “sugar” in their lifetimes. A quarter of all Howard County children and over half of all adults in Howard County are overweight or obese. Our lifestyle is making us sick. If we don’t do something today, this may be the first generation of children to live shorter lives than their parents.

One of the easiest things we can do is to “switch our drinks.” Sugary drinks such as sodas, juices and sports drinks have been linked to diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and other health conditions. Sugary drinks are now the largest source of added sugar and calories in a child’s diet.

Your position as the [food and drink coordinator for events, youth group coordinator, etc.] is very important to meeting our goals.

When ordering drinks for any event or meeting please:

* **Supply better drink choices**: use the *Better Beverage Finder* to find healthier drinks and learn where to buy them in Howard County: <http://www.betterbeveragefinder.org/>
* **Offer fewer and fewer unhealthy drink choices.** Switch the drinks. As quickly as you can, retire regular sodas, non-100% fruit juices, and sports drinks. Make choosing healthy drinks easy.
* **Let visitors know about the better drinks**: please place one of the attached table tent(s) by the better drinks when serving them.

To help, here are some easy guidelines for drink selection:

* Water is the best choice: still, sparkling, naturally flavored, less than 5 calories per serving
* Milk: Non-fat or 1%, unflavored
* Juice with no added sugar: 100% fruit or vegetable juice, in 4 oz or 8 oz. cups only
* Diet Drinks: Less than 5 calories per portion as packaged
* Coffee and Tea: Black, green or herbal tea, regular or decaffeinated coffee with no added sugars
* If your audience includes children under the age of 13, avoid serving beverages with caffeine and those that contain non-caloric sweeteners such as Aspartame (Nutrasweet), Sucralose (Splenda), Saccharine (Sweet N’Low), Stevia (Truvia, SweetLeaf, Only Sweet)

Thank you for your hard work, cooperation and support in making these changes a reality for [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION]. As always, we welcome any feedback from our members about this decision.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]