

SMALL BUSINESS

Beltsville vending firm caters to healthy cravings

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It's 4 p.m., and you know that Snickers bar is only three quarters and a few steps away from you in the snack room.

You also know it's not good for you, but you're hungry and hurried.

Beltsville's SunDun Vending has a healthier alternative to counter at-work snack attacks.

The 20-year-old company (www.sundun.com) has launched a program to offer healthier snacks and drinks in its vending machines. On May 24, SunDun joined Hunger Solutions, The YMCA of Greater Washington and Bethesda's Honest Tea to raise awareness about healthy choices and launch the Healthier Choices vending initiative in the Washington area.

SunDun has installed new machines in about 50 local businesses, about 5 percent of its current roster, including Sidwell Friends School, Discovery Communications, YMCA of Metropolitan Washington, Orbital Sciences, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Kaiser Permanente.

The products it offers are low-carb, low-calorie, organic, sugar-free or a meal replacements, says Emory Linder, the company's president. Its healthier products include nuts, trail mix, pita chips, fruit bowls and puffed rice snacks. Prices range from 50 cents to \$1.



SELECTIVE EATERS: Vending machines from SunDun Vending junk the traditional snack choices in favor of items low on carbs, sugar and calories for people who prefer pita chips to potato chips.

The World Health Organization recommends people consume no more than 10 teaspoons of added sugar a day. The average person consumes three times that amount, much of it from sugar in soft drinks.

In mid-May, Connecticut lawmakers voted to ban sodas and other junk food in cafeterias, vending machines and school stores. About 17 other states have proposed legislation aimed at curbing junk-food consumption in schools.

"The idea is to give people a choice," Linder says. "We think there will be more demand."

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