

■ LOWER LIGHTS NONPROFIT GROCERY STORE

3rd Congressional District

Nonprofit Grocery Store and Café Bring Nutritious Foods and Jobs to Franklinton

Dr. Dana Vallangeon knows that low-income patients needing health care services often lack access to healthy, affordable food. In 2016, the founder and CEO of Lower Lights Christian Health Center plans to open a full-service nonprofit grocery store and café in the heart of the Franklinton community near downtown Columbus.

The 15,000 sq. ft. Lower Lights Nonprofit Grocery Store will be located within the building that houses the health and dental clinic. It will be stocked with seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables from locally owned farm markets and gardens as well as nutritious food staples purchased through the Mid-Ohio Food Bank. Alcohol and tobacco products will not be included in the inventory.

The store will discount food for the nearly 5,000 area residents who live at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold, and will accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) and Women Infants and Children (WIC) benefits. Lower Lights will partner with another nonprofit organization for retail operations expertise.

Finance Fund provided Lower Lights with a \$25,000 healthy foods grant for preconstruction architectural and business plans. Improving access to healthy, affordable food is a priority for Finance Fund which has developed a statewide Healthy Food Financing Task Force and advocated for state seed funding to increase the number of healthy food providers in low-income communities.

The café will offer freshly prepared foods daily as well as a much-needed social destination for local residents. Catering and canning services will provide additional revenue streams to support café operations. In addition, the café will offer cooking classes to local residents focused on nutrition education and healthy food recipes.

The café and grocery will provide one full-time and 12 part-time jobs for Franklinton residents. An advisory committee of local residents will help ensure that the store is responsive to community needs.

Dr. Dana and her team have successfully served the health care needs of Franklinton residents since 2012 through Lower Lights' full-service health clinic that includes dental services and a pharmacy. *"Even though the area is developing and there is a pressing need for a full-service grocery store, the income and population of the neighborhood will not support a for-profit retailer,"* said Finance Fund President Diana Turoff. *"Lower Lights' nonprofit grocery store model is a great solution to providing access to healthy foods and nutrition education."*



FINANCE FUND INVESTMENT IMPACT:

- Increased access to healthy, affordable food for an underserved community
- Jobs for 13 Franklinton residents
- Nutrition education and a much-needed social destination



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