

JANUARY 12, 2006

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PA STORE CALLS ON STATE GOVERNMENT TO BAN TRANS FATS IN PUBLIC EATERIES

Everything Natural, an organic food and natural products store located in Clarks Summit, PA, is calling upon Pennsylvania government to introduce legislation in favor of banning trans fats from Pennsylvania's public eateries. The request spans restaurants, schools, health care facilities and "all establishments serving food in Pennsylvania." Barry Kaplan, a partner in Everything Natural, urges legislators to "take action to improve the health of Pennsylvania residents and visitors for years to come."

The request should not come as a surprise to anyone. Everything Natural opened in 1985 with the mission of offering healthier food choices to the public. At that time, the store was considered counter-culture. Over time, public thinking has shifted, in part due to increased awareness about nutritional and health issues, better availability of healthier foods, and a new push toward eliminating dangerous trans fats.

Tiburon, California and New York City were among the first cities to enact a ban on trans fats in restaurants, much to the delight of many people who were quoted as in favor of the ruling. Since the trans fat issue became more widespread, other cities and businesses have voluntarily made the same commitment or are considering a similar move. Universal Studios and Starbucks are two of the latest to publicly state that they'll offer trans fat-free food.

"Why stop at banning trans fats from restaurants?" Kaplan wants to know. "Trans fats are in so many more places! It affects the innocents who wouldn't know otherwise ... such as children who are forming eating habits. Because it's a cumulative risk, children are more affected in the long run."

Kaplan is especially enthused about the potential law because it will offer consumers better choices, something Kaplan has always recommended. "This is a call to action not only to the Pennsylvania government but also to the people they serve. We ask that everyone make healthier choices in their daily diet, not just the more vulnerable populations. Why? Because everyone needs to eat well. It's not only eating the good foods ...it's not eating the bad ones."

The store owner is more than a spokesperson for the trans fat elimination effort. He's a role model. Everything Natural does not sell any products that contain trans fats. "Part of our mission is to give people the tools to be healthy. They count on us for healthier choices, and for 22 years, that's what we've done."

According to Morgan Quitno, which measures and ranks the healthiest states each year, Pennsylvania is number 29 on the list. Since rankings were released for 2005, it dropped eight points.

While statistics may inspire us to want to do better, Kaplan says, "This isn't about where we are on a chart. It's about where we are in life."

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