

Five Questions for Retail Campaign Superheroes

by Diana Cassady

This summer was a busy period for everyone involved in the Retail Campaign data collection activities. Points of Contact (POCs) at the local lead agencies were particularly busy: they were responsible for training data collectors; authenticating and troubleshooting devices; creating routes to get data collectors to the right stores; making sure that data was being uploaded from the devices; and, when circumstances demanded, calling the TCEC hotline. Over the next few issues, we'll be featuring words of wisdom from a few POCs – and reveal their favorite superpower. Read on....

April Eagan, Inyo County Health & Human Services

You work for First 5 and Prevention in Inyo County. How did you become involved in the Retail Campaign?

The Tobacco Control Program in our county was short of staff to complete the data collection. Because I work in the Prevention unit I had worked with the tobacco program in the past on some alcohol issues. I thought it was an interesting project. And in the end, it really was. I learned a lot from the process.



Had you used smart phones or mobile devices in data collection before?

Yes, I had. I am an anthropologist and I had used my iPhone to record qualitative interviews. The sound quality is very good. In addition to using the iPhone for my research, I use many of the features of the phone, like e-mail, calling, and various apps. So I was very familiar with the functionality of the phone.

Could share one tip about using the handheld devices to complete the surveys?

It was very straightforward, very user-friendly. The survey came up right away. You just touch the screen. You didn't have to log on or type in a lot of information to get started – just the county ID.

My tip would be to look around the store and get a feel for where things were and who was in the store before getting started on the survey. That saved me a lot of time. Sometimes I wanted the questions to be in a different order or wished certain questions could be at the end. I pressed the back button a lot.



This way to the Pearsonville gas/café/mini mart on a lonely road in Inyo County. Photos: April Eagan

You visited 33 stores by yourself. What did you learn from the process?

I had a partner in the first two stores. A co-worker who grew up in the area thought it might be helpful if she accompanied me to stores where she knew the owner. It was helpful, but the rest of the store visits were fine on my own. Some stores cater to tourists and the clerks were very busy. I kept a notepad to ask the questions all at once during the clerks' down time, and then recorded the answers as they came up on the survey.

After finishing the survey, it was surprising how much healthy food was available in our area – especially the many types of fruits and vegetables. You had to look hard at first because they were hard to see. But if you looked, they were in the back of the store.

One thing the survey made me aware of was the height of ads for alcohol. I hadn't noticed that before, and I don't think many adults have either. I wonder if store owners knew these ads were so easily visible to children if they might move the ads.

You really are a Retail Campaign superhero. What is your favorite superpower?

The ability to read people's emotions, even when they don't know what they are feeling.



Looking for cool stores on a hot day in Death Valley