September 16, 2014

Mr. Billy Cyr
President and CEO
Sunny Delight Beverages Co.
10300 Alliance Road, #500
Cincinnati, Ohio 45242

Re: Sunny Delight Beverage Co.'s "Book Spree" Program

Dear Mr. Cyr:

We are writing to encourage Sunny Delight Beverage Co. to stop promoting low-nutrition beverages to children, including as part of your Book Spree program.

Although encouraging reading is a laudable goal, there is no reason to do it at the expense of children's health. The Book Spree program exposes children to unhealthy food marketing. By using sugary beverages as a means to secure school supplies, this program encourages consumption of low-nutrition beverages and contributes to the poor dietary habits that burden American families.

CSPI strongly urges Sunny Delight to adopt a marketing policy that sets nutrition standards for all types of marketing aimed at children ages 14 and under, including advertising through television, print, radio, and on the Internet; marketing in schools; and the use of licensed characters.
One way that Sunny Delight could signal its sincerity in protecting children from marketing for unhealthy foods and beverages would be to join Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Kraft, and other companies as a member of the Council of Better Business Bureaus’ (BBB) Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI). Working through the BBB framework can add credibility and transparency to your efforts to reduce the marketing of low-nutrition foods to children.

As you know, childhood obesity rates are dangerously high. Children with obesity are at greater risk for numerous illnesses as they grow into adulthood, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, certain cancers, and other debilitating diseases.

The time to act is now. Schools across the country are now implementing Smart Snack standards to limit cookies, candy, soda, and other unhealthy foods and beverages in schools. A proposed rule from the U.S. Department of Agriculture will also require local school districts, as part of their local school wellness policy, to implement policies for the marketing of foods and beverages on school campuses, in elementary, middle schools, and high schools, consistent with nutrition standards for Smart Snacks.

Feeding kids well is a shared responsibility. Parents, teachers, and food companies all have a role to play. We would welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff and look forward to hearing your plans to address food marketing to children.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Margo G. Wootan, D.Sc.
Director, Nutrition Policy

cc: Elaine Kolish, Children’s Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative