

The **Experimental Station** of Chicago, IL, received \$61,784 to create and implement a promotional and educational campaign within a new EBT program to increase the number of federal nutrition benefit clients purchasing fruits and vegetables at the 61st Street Farmers Market, and to assist other farmers markets statewide in implementing new EBT/SNAP and double-value incentive systems.

[Final Report FY10](#)

FARMERS MARKET PROMOTION PROGRAM 2010 FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Date: December 29, 2011

Recipient: EXPERIMENTAL STATION

Project Title: EXPANDING FARMERS MARKET OPPORTUNITITES AND SALES
IN CHICAGO: ENCOURAGING FEDERAL NUTRITION BENEFIT CLIENTS
TO SHOP AT THE 61ST STREET FARMERS MARKET AND HELPING TO
ESTABLISH NEW EBT SYSTEMS

Grant Number: 12-25-G-1151

Location: Chicago, Illinois

PROJECT SUMMARY

The usage of federal nutrition benefit program dollars at farmers markets is on the rise nationally. Each year, more farmers markets—including the Experimental Station’s 61st Street Farmers Market—are recognizing the benefits of accepting Electronic Benefit Transfer funds from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and running incentive programs. These federal nutrition benefit funds present a considerable new potential market to farmers markets. Markets nationwide are increasing sales, fostering job creation, and increasing their vendors’ economic viability as they perform outreach to consumers receiving SNAP benefits and provide education aimed at changing their consumption patterns to include more fresh fruits and vegetables.

The funded project aimed to meet two pressing needs: the need to improve the economic viability of small and mid-sized farms in Illinois and surrounding states that sell at the 61st Street Farmers Market, and the need of the vulnerable children and families in the Woodlawn neighborhood we serve, and more broadly in Chicago and Illinois, to access fresh, nutritious locally grown food. While meeting these needs, the project also sought to keep food dollars circulating in the regional economy rather than sending them to international food producers and manufacturers. Specifically:

- Marketing and education directed at the local community would teach low-income consumers about the benefits of eating fresher, nutritious locally grown food and of shopping at the farmers market.
- A market-based Double Value incentive program would further incentivize consumers receiving SNAP benefits to come and buy at the Market by doubling their buying power.
- Professional development for farmers market operators planning to institute EBT/SNAP and incentive programs at their markets was proposed to ensure the success of these programs as they got off the ground.
- Together, the actions outlined above would cause more SNAP recipients to come and buy at farmers markets and would increase sales by local producers.

PROJECT APPROACH

61st Street Farmers Market

The 61st Street Farmers Market has a 4-year history of operating an increasingly vibrant market in an underserved community and in attracting customers receiving SNAP benefits to the Market. Woodlawn, where the Market is located, is a primarily (98%) African-American neighborhood on Chicago's south side with a fifty-year history of disinvestment, urban blight, and all of the social and physical ills that accompany economic impoverishment. As reported by the City of Chicago, as of 2000, Woodlawn's median household income was \$18,266, with over 2000 households below the poverty level, an increase of 6% from 1990 to 2000. Economic disinvestment and the resultant lack of access to sources of nutritious and fresh foods has led to egregiously high levels of diabetes and other diet-related conditions in the Woodlawn neighborhood and other adjacent South Side neighborhoods.

Created in 2008 in response to the neighborhood's lack of access to healthy and nutritious foods, the 61st Street Farmers Market was established with the following goals in mind:

- To create an oasis in the local 'food desert' by providing residents throughout the underserved Woodlawn neighborhood and the surrounding areas with the opportunity to buy fresh, regionally grown farm products that are nutritious and affordable, and that specifically cater to the culinary needs of south side Chicago's diverse population;
- To provide a direct marketing opportunity for producers of regionally grown agricultural and other farm-related products;
- To reflect the diverse demographic composition of the local community by seeking to recruit regional agricultural producers and vendors of African-American descent;
- To create a place to educate consumers about health and nutrition, including how food is grown, produced, or prepared; and
- To make fresh, affordable produce available to customers receiving SNAP benefits and to beneficiaries of the Farmers Market Senior Nutrition program.

With strong community, aldermanic, and volunteer support, our Saturday (9am-2pm) market opened in May 2008 with 12 vendors offering locally and sustainably grown fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy, cheese, eggs, meats, fish and bakery items. The Market established an EBT system to accept SNAP and asked that vendors register to accept Senior Coupons. During our first season, an average of 150 customers shopped at the outdoor market each week, spending almost \$2,000 in SNAP and Senior Coupon purchases. In November, we moved the market inside the Experimental Station, extending the market season by six weeks and creating Chicago's first south side indoor market.

Since 2008, our experience providing access to fresh and healthy foods in the Woodlawn neighborhood has revealed that food access is a multi-dimensional problem. To successfully improve food access, a farmers market must: 1) make fresh and healthy foods *available* by accepting LINK and ensuring that low-income residents will feel welcome; 2) make the fruits and vegetables *desirable* by rebuilding the food culture such that the population knows how to prepare and enjoy these foods; and 3) make them *affordable*, such that low-income customers can pay the higher cost of local, sustainably

grown food. In order to provide real food access for our low-income neighbors, we therefore needed to focus on outreach in the local community, where information is passed primarily by word of mouth, advertising our acceptance of SNAP and Senior Coupons. We needed to develop and provide a variety of educational opportunities to teach local residents how to prepare and enjoy the foods sold at the Market. And, finally, we needed to offer incentives to low-income customers to draw them to the Market's healthy foods. This we have done actively over the past several years.

With the assistance of groups of volunteers, the 61st Street Farmers Market manager reaches out to businesses, churches, schools, community centers, social service agencies (local WIC offices, IDHS office), aldermanic offices, low-income housing offices, tenant groups, day care centers, hospitals, clinics, garden fairs, art fairs, and police offices where they distribute banners, posters, flyers and refrigerator magnets advertising the Market. In addition to volunteer market outreach days in November and May when volunteers (including volunteers from AmeriCorps) canvass the neighborhood distributing flyers, posters and magnets, from October 2010-September 2011, the Market manager undertook a variety of outreach initiatives to promote our indoor (November-December) and outdoor markets (May-October). These include: elementary school parents' meetings on healthy eating; a healthy farmers market eating workshop for tenants living in a local low-income apartment building; participation in Earthfest at which we distributed information about the Market; two Market tours for low-income Urban Initiatives program participants; promotion of the Market to residents at local police beat meetings; promotion of the Market to site supervisors at local WIC offices, to clinicians and staff at the University of Chicago's Health Clinics and Hospitals, to staff at Catholic Charities and at Access Community Health Network, to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and to the Chicago Office of Tourism; promotion of the Market and healthy eating to hundreds of families at Taste of Chicago's Family Village; discussions and Market tours with three groups of adults from Community Health about how to eat more healthfully and how to use their LINK cards at the Market. A number of these organizations and agencies distributed our flyers to their clients. The University of Chicago Medical Centers emailed the flyers to all of their south side clinics. In 2011, for internet users, we also maintained a Market Facebook page, provided information about the Market on our website, and sent out weekly farmers market email update to our list of approximately 2500 contacts.

In an effort to make more affordable the sustainably and organically produced foods sold at our Market, in 2009, the 61st Street Farmers Market launched Illinois' first Double Value Coupon Program, with the generous support of Wholesome Wave Foundation. Through this innovative incentive program, the Market matches SNAP purchases up to \$25 per cardholder, per Market day. From October-December 2009, we provided \$1900 in matching 'SNAP Dollars' to SNAP beneficiaries for the purchase of fresh and healthy foods at the Market. \$1551 of these 'SNAP Dollars' were redeemed for SNAP-eligible foods at the Market. Continued in 2010 and 2011, the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) has enabled us to provide the healthiest fruits and vegetables available locally to our low-income customers at an affordable price and to increase vendor sales. In 2010, the Market redeemed almost \$7,300 in Double Value Coupons and almost \$7,000 in 2011.

Making healthy foods both available and affordable for our low-income community has been a critical component of the Market's mission and success thus far. In addition, we have built a robust Market education program to address the acute loss of food culture—the knowledge of how food benefits us, and how is cultivated, prepared, and enjoyed—that is so prevalent in disadvantaged neighborhoods like ours, where several generations have grown up on fast- and prepared foods.

The 61st Street Farmers Market created Market School as a permanent feature of every Saturday outdoor market day. Coordinated and overseen by the 61st Street Farmers market manager, Market School provides a variety of educational experiences for market-goers: information about what it means to buy locally, how sustainably grown foods are better for you and the planet, what you might ask your farmer about the food you are purchasing, how to garden in your apartment, how to eat and live more healthfully, how to raise backyard chickens, etc. In 2011, Market School activities were provided by volunteers from the Shedd Aquarium (purchasing sustainable seafood), the University of Chicago Medical Centers (nutrition information), Purple Asparagus, Truck Farm (a farm in the back of a truck), Chicago Health Coaches (fun and educational activities to improve health and wellness), Climate Cycle (how to cook in a solar oven), Fooditude (games and activities about local seasonal produce), and numerous other organizations and individuals. As part of its at-market educational programming, the Market also offers weekly chef demonstrations by local chefs, tastings, and recipes, all employing seasonal ingredients from the Market.

In the past three years, we have brought food education to 1000 students in the local schools, teaching food identification, sustainable farming practices, and healthy eating. From October 2010 to September 2011, we provided in-school food education to 300 youth at three local elementary schools and, with Illinois Specialty Crop Grant funding, we were able to produce a “Farmers Market Healthy Eating Workbook” to use in these in-school workshops. These colorful booklets contain a food journal, seasonality charts, information about how crops are grown and which crops are grown in our region, and simple recipes to make at home. In addition, each student receives \$3 in promotional ‘Market Dollars’ to spend at the Market (vendors reimbursed by the Market). In the fall of 2010, with funding from an Illinois Specialty Crops Grant, we offered adult cooking classes, teaching residents from the Woodlawn community how to prepare healthy and delicious meals on a tight budget. In 2011, again with funding from an Illinois Specialty Crops Grant, we provided a series of 15 cooking classes to 20 local youth, who learned how to prepare and enjoy a great variety of fruits and vegetables—fresh kale salad becoming their favorite! Also in 2011, with private funding, we offered a short series of baking classes, in which local youth learned to make their own (healthier) muffins, pies, cookies, and pancakes.

The 61st Street Farmers Market continues to develop collaboration with the University of Chicago Medical Centers to implement a Fruit & Veggie Prescription program. Through such a program we could increase our Market's clientele while improving health outcomes in the local community by targeting individuals with diet-related diseases.

SNAP Access for City of Chicago Farmers Markets

Having implemented and developed a successful SNAP program at the 61st Street Farmers Market, in 2010, in partnership with the City of Chicago Mayor's Office of Special Events, Department of Family and Support Services and Department of Community Development, the Experimental Station provided SNAP service at five City of Chicago farmers markets (Daley Plaza, Lincoln Square, Division Street, Beverly, and South Shore). This successful program enabled SNAP recipients to purchase almost \$29,000 in fresh produce and healthy foods at these markets over the course of the market season (May-October). In addition, the Daley Plaza market established the highest total SNAP sales at a single market in Illinois, with \$16,120 in SNAP sales. In conjunction with this program, the Experimental Station implemented a Wholesome Wave-funded Double Value Coupon Program at these five City markets, adding an additional \$4,000 to producers' revenues.

In 2011, the Experimental Station again partnered with the City of Chicago Department of Cultural and Special Events and Department of Family and Support Services to provide expanded SNAP service at ten City of Chicago farmers markets (Daley Plaza, Lincoln Square, Division Street, Beverly, South Shore, Pullman, Federal Plaza, Wicker Park, Bridgeport, and Hyde Park). The program produced SNAP sales of \$46,066. Deemed highly successful, this program will again be expanded to 15 City farmers markets in 2012. Five of these will be new markets established in Chicago's west side 'food deserts.'

LINK Up Illinois

Also in 2010-2011, in partnership with Wholesome Wave and the Illinois Farmers Market Network, and with initial funding support from Fresh Taste and The Chicago Community Foundation, the Experimental Station created a new program called 'LINK Up Illinois.' The purpose of LINK Up Illinois is to make fresh and healthy foods sold at farmers markets affordable for all Illinoisans, regardless of their economic status. LINK Up Illinois provides training, technical support and funding to Illinois farmers markets and other direct producer to consumer venues for developing and implementing Double Value Coupon Programs at their markets. In 2011, through LINK Up Illinois, Experimental Station (with program management by the 61st Street Farmers Market Manager) provided approximately \$53,000 for Double Value incentive program reimbursements to 20 farmers markets throughout Illinois (including Chicago markets, Woodstock, Oak Park, Springfield, Urbana Champaign, Bloomington, Aurora and Pulaski), generating over \$125,000 in SNAP and Double Value Coupon Program sales. LINK Up Illinois aims to serve up to 40 markets in 2012.

EBT/SNAP Consulting

To further support the expansion of EBT/SNAP acceptance at farmers markets in Illinois, with FMPP funding, the Experimental Station was able to provide free EBT/SNAP consulting to any farmers market or direct producer to consumer venue interested in implementing such a program. From November 2010 through June 2011, the Experimental Station employed our Onsite EBT/SNAP Manager from the City of Chicago farmers market EBT program to provide this service. The EBT/SNAP consultant worked with the Illinois Farmers Market Network to advertise and promote his services

(using the IFMN listserv and conference calls), to identify potential interested markets, and to organize and host a daylong Farmers Market Forum Workshop held at Experimental Station in February 2011. At the February 16 Forum, in addition to setting up and hosting the event, our EBT/SNAP consultant presented information on EBT/SNAP service implementation and best practices to approximately 70 interested attendees. He also presented at three additional Farmers Market Forums located around the state (Springfield, East Moline, Geneva), the Illinois Specialty Crop Conference (Springfield), the Family Farmed Expo held in Chicago, and a farmers market webinar. Altogether, these forums and conferences allowed our EBT/SNAP consultant to present information on implementing EBT/SNAP services to over 300 attendees.

From November through June, the EBT/SNAP consultant met, spoke with and trained almost 30 farmers markets and organizations interested in starting farmers markets on implementing EBT systems, and/or expanding EBT use (see 'Beneficiaries' below). He made presentations on the benefits of accepting SNAP at farmers markets to such groups as CLOCC (Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children), Kennedy King College Urban Earth Week, and Feeding Illinois. The EBT/SNAP consultant also provided new-employee training and program set up for the expanded SNAP Access For City of Chicago Farmers Markets program in 2011.

From October 2010 to September 2011, the USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program provided essential support to the Experimental Station's variety of farmers market and EBT/SNAP activities and outreach programs. We are extremely thankful for the opportunity provided by FMPP funding to build our Market clientele and to sustain and expand our EBT-related activities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

We expected that the project funded by the Farmers Market Promotion Program would result in the following outcomes:

1) Development of culturally appropriate marketing and education materials aimed at the federal nutrition benefit client population around the 61st Street Farmers Market.

Outcomes Achieved (Oct 2010-Sept 2011):

We created 10 street banners, 100 posters, 7500 half-page flyers, 2500 refrigerator magnets, point-of-sale signage, 500 Market dollars, 2500 'SNAP Dollars,' 50 seasonality charts, and copied approximately 900 recipes.

2) Development and implementation of a marketing and education plan designed to reach the target population, leading to increased sales for our vendors.

Outcomes Achieved:

Marketing and promotional efforts from October 2010 to September 2011, described above, increased our Market clientele from an average of 450 customers per week to approximately 550 customers per week during the 2011 outdoor market season.

According to data derived from our 2011 Market Survey (designed and implemented on October 1 by University of Chicago Survey Lab Co-Director Martha van Haitsma), **92%** of the 436 customers surveyed that day stated that they came to the Market to purchase fresh produce. **61%** stated that the Market had increased or greatly increased their purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables. Among customers surveyed, approximately **15%** stated that they use their SNAP EBT card to purchase foods at the Market. Among SNAP benefit recipients, **82%** stated that the Double Value Coupon incentive was important or very important (74% stated that they would not have come to the Market without the matching incentive) in their decision to shop at the Market.

Educational programming from October 2010 to September 2011 consisted of the following:

- 10 in-school food education workshops at Carnegie, Fiske, Reavis, and Fermi Elementary Schools for 300 youth
- 13 adult cooking classes involving up to 15 participants per class, taught by vegan chef Gabrielle Darvassy
- 15 youth cooking classes (fruits and vegetables) involving 10-15 participants per class, 20 participants total, taught by vegan chef Gabrielle Darvassy
- 4 youth baking classes involving an average of 5 participants per class, 8 participants total
- 30 planned chef demonstrations/tastings
- 30 planned Market School activities/presentations

According to our 2011 Market Survey, **62%** of Market customers surveyed reported that they had learned something new about sustainably grown, organic or local food as a result of coming to the Market; **47%** stated that they had learned more about nutrition and healthy eating as a result of coming to the Market; **39%** stated that they had learned more about food preparation as a result of coming to the Market.

According to surveys conducted at the completion of the adult and youth cooking classes, **100%** of adults surveyed stated that they cooked more meals per week after participating in the Experimental Station's Fall 2010 Adult Cooking classes, **71%** stated that they consume more fruits and vegetables since participating in the Adult Cooking classes, **82%** of youth participating in the Youth Cooking classes stated that they consumed more fruits and vegetables since taking the classes, **73%** of the youth stated that their families eat more fruits and vegetables since they have been taking the classes.

3) Continued implementation of SNAP program and Double Value Coupon program at the market aimed at incentivizing the target population, and leading to increased sales for our vendors.

Outcomes Achieved:

61st Street Farmers Market SNAP purchases also indicate that our marketing efforts are drawing more low-income customers to the Market. While the Market saw \$5,000 in SNAP purchases in 2009, SNAP purchases increased to \$10,000 in both 2010 and 2011. 2010 SNAP purchases exceeded our projections for the year.

61st Street Farmers Market Double Value Coupon Program incentive funds increased, as projected, from \$1,900 in 2009 to \$7,300 in 2010 and just under \$7,000 in 2011

SNAP purchases and Double Value Coupon Program purchases in 2010 and 2011 have resulted in more than **\$34,000** of additional revenues for 61st Street Farmers Market vendors.

4) Management, administration and tracking of Market customer demographics and activities, including SNAP transactions.

With the assistance of a professional survey developer, the 61st Street Farmers Market develops a Market survey each year that is conducted on one Market day in September or early October. In 2011, the survey was conducted on October 1. It is estimated that the survey was completed by approximately 80% of market customers that day. This survey allows us to assess customer demographics and the impact of our activities. The Market also tracks SNAP customers and SNAP purchases on a weekly basis. The tracking of SNAP purchases is required for reimbursement to market vendors, as well as desirable to measure the impact of SNAP acceptance on vendor revenues. Results are reported to funders, the City of Chicago, FNS, and partner Wholesome Wave. Wholesome Wave consolidates the data with that of other partners and reports to national policy makers.

Demographics: According to our 2011 Market Survey, **82.6%** of the shoppers surveyed stated that they were from Hyde Park, South Kenwood, Woodlawn, South Shore, or Washington Park neighborhoods. The remainder came from 30 other Chicago neighborhoods, other Illinois cities, the state of Texas, and the country of Uganda. Approximately **15%** of customers surveyed use a SNAP EBT card. **64%** of respondents were female, **36%** male. **55%** of customers surveyed were white, **30%** were African-American, **15%** Hispanic, Asian and other.

SNAP Transaction Figures: In 2011, the 61st Street Farmers Market had **184** SNAP customers, making **479** SNAP transactions, for a total of **\$9,996** in SNAP purchases.

5) Provision of EBT/SNAP and incentive program professional development services to other Illinois farmers markets.

As described above, the Experimental Station's EBT/SNAP consultant worked closely with the Illinois Farmers Market Network to identify Illinois farmers markets seeking SNAP/EBT startup assistance. The Illinois Farmers Market Network facilitated contact with 288 Illinois farmers markets. Over the course of six months, the EBT/SNAP consultant consulted with and trained on an individual basis almost 30 Illinois farmers markets from throughout the state, and presented information and best practices to approximately 300 farmers market managers and organizers through Farmers Market Forums and conference presentations.

BENEFICIARIES

61st Street Farmers Market educational initiatives beneficiaries:

- Approximately 550 market customers who have the opportunity each week to watch a chef demonstration, taste the dish that is prepared, and receive the weekly recipe.
- Approximately 550 market customers who have the opportunity each week to learn from the Market School volunteers.
- 20 youth from low-income households who participated in the youth cooking classes
- 8 youth from low-income households who participated in the youth baking classes
- 15 adults from low-income households who participated in the adult cooking classes

EBT/SNAP consulting services beneficiaries:

- Loyola University
- Weiss Hospital
- Glenview Farmers Market
- Douglass County (starting new markets w/EBT)
- Heartland Local Food Network
- Kankakee Farmers Market
- Chicago Botanic Garden
- First Street Farmers Market (Champaign)
- Evanston Farmers Market
- City of Aurora (implementing EBT at two farmers markets)
- Lawndale Christian Health Center
- Eden Place Farmers Market
- Fresh Moves
- Schaumburg Farmers Market
- Bud Billiken Green Team Farmers Market
- Kane County Farmers Market

- South Elgin Parks and Recreation
- PCC Community Wellness Center Farm Stand
- Harvey Farmers Market
- Independence Farmers Market
- Andersonville Farmers Market
- Pilsen Community Farmers Market
- Chicago Urban Lights Farmers Market
- City of Chicago Farmers Markets
- Faith In Place Farmers Market
- Mercy Housing

The above list does not include farmers markets and other direct producer to consumer venues that attended the Illinois Farmers Market Forums or other public presentations and webinars given by the EBT/SNAP consultant on the topic of EBT/SNAP implementation.

Double Value Coupon Program training (and LINK Up Illinois funding) beneficiaries:

- Woodstock Farmers Market
- Oak Park Farmers Market
- Bloomington Farmers Market
- Urbana Market at the Square
- Illinois Products Farmers Market (Springfield)
- Bronzeville Community Market
- Old General Store Farmers Market (Pulaski, IL)
- Aurora Farmers Market
- SNAP Access for City of Chicago Farmers Markets program

Local farmers and producers benefited from over \$150,000 of increased revenues in 2010 and 2011 as a direct result of the Experimental Station's EBT/SNAP promotional efforts.

\$17,000 in 2010 (61st Street Farmers Market SNAP and DVCP total)
 \$17,000 in 2011 (61st Street Farmers Market SNAP and DVCP total)
 \$34,000 in 2010 (City of Chicago Farmers Markets SNAP and DVCP total)
 \$62,200 in 2011 (City of Chicago Farmers Markets SNAP and DVCP total)
\$20,150 in 2011 (LINK Up Illinois markets DVCP only)
\$150,350

According to a 2010 Participating Farmer Survey conducted by partner Wholesome Wave, the Double Value Coupon Program was very important or important to farmers' sales at the market. Approximately **55%** of farmers who completed the survey reported that the market's federal nutrition benefits and Double Value Coupon programs were important or very important in their decision to continue as a vendor at the market. Farmers selling fruits and vegetables at markets implementing a Double Value Coupon Program saw increased sales at higher rates than other vendors. Farmers also reported making changes to their operations as a result of the introduction of the Double Value Coupon Program at their market: **15%** reported increasing acreage and production, while **12%** diversified their products, and almost **10%** added hoop houses or greenhouses.

LESSONS LEARNED

Lesson #1: Ongoing Market outreach and promotion are critical to a vibrant farmers market that can weather adverse economic and meteorological conditions. In 2011, adverse weather conditions negatively impacted supplies of local foods sold at Chicago farmers markets throughout May and June. Due to the poor start to the year for agricultural producers, a number of crops did not appear at all at the markets this year. The limited offerings during the first two months of the season led to a decrease in the number of customers attending the markets in May and June. Farmers reported a 20% decline in sales revenues in 2011. We believe that the overall decline in farmers market sales is the result both of the slow start to the market season due to poor planting conditions for agricultural producers and to the weak economy; customers are spending less. It is notable that farmers selling at the 61st Street Farmers Market reported that their sales at our Market held steady. We attribute this to the fact that the Market increased its customer base by approximately the same percentage as the % decline in customer purchases.

Lesson #2: In order to attract low-income customers to the healthy foods sold at the local farmers market, it is very important to provide incentives, such as the Double Value Coupon Program. As noted above, 74% of SNAP customers stated that they would not have come to the Market without the matching incentive.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Experimental Station is a 501-c-3 non-profit located in Chicago. The mission of the Experimental Station is to build independent cultural infrastructure on Chicago's South Side. It does this by fostering a dynamic ecology of innovative educational and cultural programs, small business enterprises and community initiatives. Its facilities provide essential resources enabling vulnerable initiatives to stabilize and flourish. These resources include: office, exhibition, and other workspace at discounted rents; information networks; tools and technical support. The Experimental Station seeks to maintain a diverse and interdisciplinary balance of participants and activities and to generate events, lectures, and exhibitions that are free and open to the public. Areas of primary interest include, but are not limited to, art, food culture, ecology, cultural criticism, independent publishing and alternative models of education. Experimental Station programs are currently: 61st Street Farmers Market, LINK Up Illinois, SNAP Access For City of Chicago Farmers Markets, Blackstone Bicycle Works, Invisible Institute.

In 2009, Experimental Station entered into a strategic partnership with **Wholesome Wave**, a 501(c)(3) national entity, to work together to empower historically excluded urban and rural communities to make better food choices by increasing access to and affordability of fresh, locally grown food. Wholesome Wave's successful Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP), which doubles the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (formerly food stamps) and other Federal nutrition benefits when used at participating farmers markets, has expanded to 25 states within four years. Wholesome Wave partners with 50 community-based non-profit organizations, similar to Experimental Station, to bring incentives to federal benefit recipients that can be redeemed towards fresh locally grown produce. Their work impacts over 1,700 participating farms. Operating nationally and with strong relationships with policy makers at the national level, Wholesome Wave draws upon the experience and collected data of its numerous partners to advocate for changes in national food policy. In addition to policy development and advocacy, Wholesome Wave provides fundraising assistance, technical support, and data collection support to the 61st Street Farmers Market and LINK Up Illinois.

City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services provided funding for the SNAP Access For City of Chicago Farmers Markets program in 2011. The City of Chicago Department of Cultural and Special Events is responsible for operating and managing the City of Chicago farmers markets program.

Websites:

Experimental Station: www.experimentalstation.org

Wholesome Wave: www.wholesomewave.org

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**EXPERIMENTAL STATION
Participant Questionnaire
USDA AMS Farmers Market Promotion Program**

1. Impact on Farmers—The following impacts to farmers can be attributed to activities funded under the Experimental Station’s FMPP grant:

a. 61st Street Farmers Market farmers and vendors do not report income to the Experimental Station. While we cannot report specifically on their revenues, farmers did report that, despite an overall decline (20%) in sales at all of their markets in 2011, the 61st Street Farmers Market sales remained consistent with 2010. We attribute this to increases in the number of customers who attended the Market in 2011.

b. Local farmers and producers benefited from over **\$150,000** of increased revenues in 2010 and 2011 as a direct result of the Experimental Station’s EBT/SNAP promotional efforts.

- \$17,000 in 2010 (61st Street Farmers Market SNAP and DVCP total)
- \$34,000 in 2010 (City of Chicago Farmers Markets SNAP and DVCP total)
\$51,000

- \$17,000 in 2011 (61st Street Farmers Market SNAP and DVCP total)
- \$62,200 in 2011 (City of Chicago Farmers Markets SNAP and DVCP total)
- \$20,150 in 2011 (LINK Up Illinois markets DVCP only)
\$99,350

The \$99,350 total does not reflect increases in SNAP sales at LINK Up Illinois markets once the Double Value Coupon Program was implemented.

2. Impact on Consumers— The following positive impacts to customers can be attributed to activities funded under our FMPP grant:

a. The 61st Street Farmers Market was able to increase its average daily customer base by approximately **20%** from 2010 to 2011.

b. The 61st Street Farmers Market made possible **\$10,000** in SNAP purchases by low-income customers in 2011, as well as **\$7,000** in Double Value Coupon purchases, maintaining 2010 SNAP purchase levels. This is significant, as 61st Street Farmers Market farmers reported a significant (20%) decline in their overall sales in 2011. The fact that SNAP sales remained steady in 2011 reflects the increase in SNAP customers coming to the Market.

c. **61%** of customers who completed the 61st Street Farmers Market’s 2011 Annual Survey stated that the Market had increased or greatly increased their purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables.

d. **62%** of Market customers surveyed reported that they had learned something new about sustainably grown, organic or local food as a result of coming to the Market.

e. **47%** of customers surveyed stated that they had learned more about nutrition and healthy eating as a result of coming to the Market.

f. **39%** of customers surveyed stated that they had learned more about food preparation as a result of coming to the Market.

3. Impact on Organization Programming—The Farmers Market Promotion Program funding was essential to the Experimental Station’s ability to develop our EBT/SNAP programming and expertise in the past year. Thanks to FMPP funding, we were able to retain our City of Chicago Farmers Market EBT/SNAP Onsite Manager after October 2010. That person then provided free EBT/SNAP consulting and training services from November 2010 to June 2011. The EBT/SNAP Consultant position was key both in Experimental Station’s ability to double our City of Chicago EBT program in 2011, as well as to the development of LINK Up Illinois. In 2012, the EBT/SNAP Consultant will manage Experimental Station’s LINK Up Illinois program.

The Farmers Market Promotion Program also provided funding for our Farmers Market Manager position. This individual assisted in the development of LINK Up Illinois and managed the program during its first year.

4. Impact on Organizational Operations—Experimental Station is a growing and maturing organization. FMPP requirements, coupled with hiring and excellent office manager, helped us to put into place a variety of policies and procedures that the organization had not yet developed.

5. Challenges During Implementation of the Project—a. Our greatest challenge in expanding EBT/SNAP services at other markets was technological. Wireless EBT machines in downtown Chicago do not function consistently and, when these finicky machines go down, it is essential to have a processing company that can respond immediately to your needs.

b. In the course of the season, we changed both processing companies and machines.

6. Partnerships—Our partnerships with Wholesome Wave, the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and Department of Cultural and Special Events, the Illinois Farmers Market Network, and Fresh Taste at The Chicago Community Foundation have all been essential to the success of the project this past year. Wholesome Wave and Fresh Taste at the Chicago Community Foundation both provided support and funding for LINK Up Illinois. Wholesome Wave has been a key partner in providing technical support for data collection and for advocating for food policy changes at a national level. The City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and Department of Cultural and Special Events provided funding and support for the SNAP Access at City of Chicago Farmers Markets program. The Illinois Farmers Market Network provided networking and promotional support for the EBT/SNAP Consulting position, as well as networking and advocacy support for LINK Up Illinois.

7. Addition Funding Secured—

Harper Court Arts Council	\$10,000 (61 st Street Farmers Market)
Leo S. Guthman Fund	\$10,000 (61 st Street Farmers Market)
Kraft Foods	\$10,000 (61 st Street Farmers Market)
Illinois Dept of Agriculture	\$10,000 (61 st Street Farmers Market)
The Chicago Community Trust	\$25,000 (61 st Street Farmers Market)
Wholesome Wave	\$15,000 (LINK Up Illinois)
Fresh Taste	\$25,000 (LINK Up Illinois)
The Chicago Community Foundtn.	\$37,500 (LINK Up Illinois)
The Chicago Community Trust	\$50,000 (LINK Up Illinois)
Aetna Foundation	\$30,000 (LINK Up Illinois)

8. Replicability of Project—EBT/SNAP services are expanding to farmers markets all around the country. It is perhaps atypical for a city to ‘outsource’ its SNAP/EBT service to a single organization, as is happening in Chicago, with Experimental Station providing EBT/SNAP service at the City of Chicago farmers markets. There are, however, efficiencies in doing so. Experimental Station has also developed best practices over the past four years that enable the program to run efficiently.

The work of LINK Up Illinois—to expand the use of double value incentive programs at farmers markets for low-income customers—is replicable. However, it is very important for future policy changes at the state and national level that the data from markets implementing incentives be collected in a systematic fashion and combined with other data nationally. This is a service that Wholesome Wave, as a national entity with many partnering organizations, provides.

9. The FMPP Experience Overall—The experience of the Experimental Station has been very positive as related to our FMPP funding. Besides the opportunity for organizational growth that the funding provided, we have appreciated the relationships that we have developed with USDA employees and officials over the past year.

10. Personal Benefits of Project—As the founder of the 61st Street Farmers Market, it has been very exciting to see the direction that the Market has taken since its inception. The EBT/SNAP-related programming that we have developed over the past two years has been the result of our experience creating a small, yet dynamic community market. It has been personally rewarding to build a community of farmers and vendors and customers who believe in the need to support one another, as well as to see how a historically divided community such as ours (Black/White, poor/wealthy) can reconnect by providing healthy food for all.

11. If an opportunity arises in the future, we/I would be willing to appear in a webinar, be interviewed in a podcast or video, or participate in other events.

I give my permission, as a participant in the Farmers Market Promotion Program, for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to use my name and information provided by me in reports or other promotional material created about this FMPP-funded project.

Name: Constance (Connie) S. Spreen

Title: Executive Director, Experimental Station

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Experimental Station Grant #: 12-25-G-1151

EXPERIMENTAL STATION 2012 FINAL REPORT UPDATE

Date: September 29, 2012

Recipient: EXPERIMENTAL STATION

Project Title: EXPANDING FARMERS MARKET OPPORTUNITIES AND SALES
IN CHICAGO: ENCOURAGING FEDERAL NUTRITION BENEFIT CLIENTS
TO SHOP AT THE 61ST STREET FARMERS MARKET AND HELPING TO
ESTABLISH NEW EBT SYSTEMS

Grant Number: 12-25-G-1151

Location: Chicago, Illinois

SUMMARY

Since receiving USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program funding in 2010, the Experimental Station has expanded farmers market opportunities and sales in Chicago both at the 61st Street Farmers Market and at other farmers markets in Chicago and throughout the state of Illinois.

As previously reported, thanks to FMPP funding, Experimental Station provided free EBT consulting services and technical support to farmers markets and direct producer-to-consumer venues throughout the state from November 2010 thru June 2011. Expanding upon that work, Experimental Station launched a new program in July 2011 we call 'LINK Up Illinois' to assist farmers markets to implement EBT technology at their markets and to implement Double Value Coupon Programs, such that SNAP beneficiaries receive double the value of their SNAP dollars at participating markets. In 2012, Experimental Station's LINK Up Illinois program provided technical support, training, and Double Value Coupon funding to 38 Illinois farmers markets. Most recently, Experimental Station has partnered with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon and the Illinois Department of Agriculture to promote the USDA's Wireless EBT Technology grant program, and select and train farmers market grantees.

Background

The LINK Up Illinois program has been developed and directed by Experimental Station Executive Director Connie Spreen, in partnership with Wholesome Wave Charitable Ventures and the Illinois Farmers Market Association. She has been supported in this effort by Mr. Dennis Ryan and Mr. Corey Chatman, LINK Up Illinois program managers in 2011 and 2012. The Experimental Station is responsible for all aspects of the program, including fundraising and development, program implementation, administration, data collection, reporting, and overall advocacy. Wholesome Wave provides fundraising and data collection support, as well as policy advocacy for the program at the national level. The Illinois Farmers Market Association provides outreach to farmers markets regarding the program, as well as advocacy at the state level.

LINK Up Illinois was created to expand upon Experimental Station's experience and expertise in implementing SNAP/EBT programs and Double Value Coupon Programs (DVCP) at our own 61st Street Farmers Market and other farmers markets in the Chicago area. Since 2009, when the 61st Street Farmers Market led the state with over \$10,000 in

LINK (Illinois' name for the federal SNAP program) sales, Experimental Station has provided free consulting to farmers markets throughout the state in how successfully to implement EBT systems to accept LINK at their markets. In 2010, Experimental Station provided SNAP/EBT service at 5 City of Chicago-run markets, as well as at the 61st Street Farmers Market, and carried out six Wholesome Wave-funded Double Value Coupon Programs. In 2011 this program expanded to 11 markets, and in 2012 to 16 markets, including 6 in designated 'food desert' neighborhoods. Consequently, Experimental Station has become the recognized leader in the state for implementing incentives at farmers markets to increase the use of LINK benefits at those markets and to increase the consumption of fresh and healthy foods by low-income consumers.

Conceived as a program with a 4-year duration, LINK Up Illinois aims over 4 years to assist up to 75 Illinois farmers markets in implementing Double Value Coupon Programs and thereby to demonstrate, through collected data, the benefits of making the fresh and healthy foods sold at farmers markets available *and affordable* for low-income Americans. Only in our second year, LINK Up Illinois has already enabled a dramatic increase in the number of Illinois farmers markets that can accept LINK—from 25 in 2010 to 100 markets projected for 2013. We project that LINK Up Illinois-funded markets will stimulate more than \$200,000 in combined LINK and DVCP sales in Illinois in 2012.

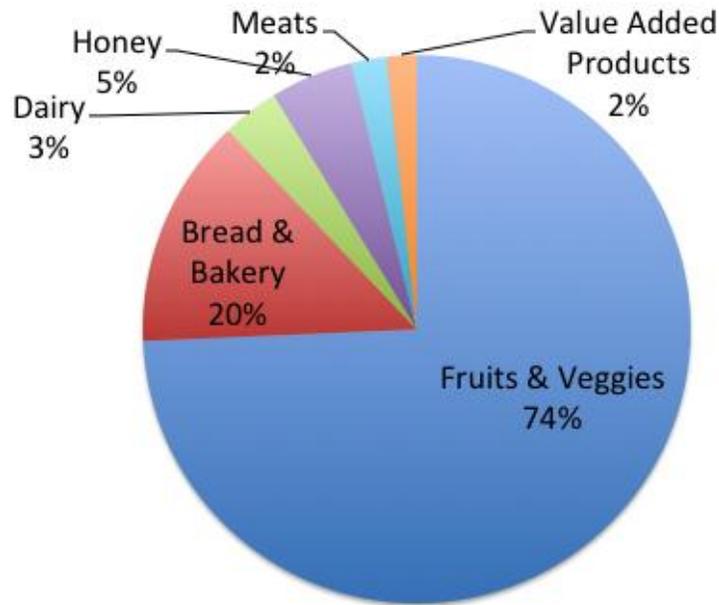
Accomplishments and Challenges

LINK Up Illinois completed its pilot year in December 2011 and launched its second year in the spring of 2012. We are very pleased that, with funding provided by The Aetna Foundation, Fresh Taste at The Chicago Community Foundation, J.R. Albert Foundation, Walter S. Mander Foundation, Wholesome Wave and The Chicago Community Trust, and with assistance from the Illinois Farmers Market Association, LINK Up Illinois was able to train and provide technical support and Double Value Coupon funding to 20 farmers markets located throughout the state in 2011.

The impact of LINK Up Illinois' pilot year is clear. LINK Up Illinois' Double Value Coupon Program generated \$84,826 in LINK purchases and \$43,171 in DVCP sales at participating markets. This represents a 42% increase over 2010 levels when all Illinois markets accepting LINK had recorded a combined total of \$60,000 in LINK sales.

In addition to sales figures, LINK Up Illinois is deeply interested in the impact that it has on consumer behavior. In a 2011 survey conducted by LINK Up Illinois participating markets, **58% of LINK shoppers stated that they would not have come to the market without the Double Value Coupon Program incentive, and another 34% stated that the incentive was important in their decision to shop at the market.** Only 4% stated that they would have come to the market without the Double Value Coupon Program incentive. **87% of these same LINK shoppers stated that their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables had increased (41%) or increased greatly (46%), as a result of shopping at the farmers market that season.** This survey data gathered from LINK shoppers has been confirmed by sales patterns tracked at the ten City of Chicago farmers markets at which Experimental Station provided LINK/EBT service in 2011. At these ten markets, fully 74% of Double Value incentive coupons were spent on fruits and vegetables.

BREAKDOWN OF 2011 DVCP PURCHASES AT CITY OF CHICAGO MARKETS



Although we did not require LINK Up Illinois participating markets to track the sales patterns of their customers in 2011, we are encouraged by the above data, which provides a strong argument against those who insist that low-income customers will, if given the choice, purchase and consume unhealthy foods. This data indicates the contrary.

2012 Numbers

After exceeding our initial 2011 pilot-year goal of 10-15 markets, we were able to meet our target of 35-40 markets in 2012, working with 38 markets from Woodstock in the north to Pulaski in the south.

LINK Up Illinois has distributed \$97,051 to participating markets for 2012 (see market listing and funding distribution breakdown under 'Financial Results'). At least 80% of granted funds must be spent on Double Value Coupon Program reimbursements.

As of August 31, 2012, LINK Up Illinois' 38 Double Value Coupon Programs have generated approximately \$90,000 in LINK sales and \$45,000 in DVCP sales. This represents over 6,700 purchases by 2,625 new customers to the program so far in 2012. With two months of the market season remaining for most markets, Experimental Station predicts that LINK Up Illinois participating markets will generate \$125,000 in LINK sales and \$75,000 in DVCP sales in 2012. This is approximately \$77,000 more in combined LINK and DVCP sales relative to 2011, representing a 63% increase in just the past year, and more than a 100% increase in LINK sales since 2010.

While pleased with these increases, LINK Up Illinois and its partner markets did experience some challenges in 2012. Had the Midwest experienced a more typical weather pattern this year, we suspect that LINK sales may have been higher yet. Abnormally warm March temperatures followed by several hard frosts in the spring, extreme drought conditions, and intense summer heat made growing fruit, vegetables and livestock very challenging in the Midwest. The adverse growing conditions significantly reduced the quantities of product making it to our farmers markets this year. Fruit was especially hard hit; some fruit growers lost as much as 90% of their fruit this year. As low-income consumers shopping at farmers markets often spend a large portion of their LINK dollars and Double Value Coupons on fruit, the lack of fruit likely reduced LINK purchases.

LINK and DVCP sales at farmers markets located in the Chicago area did receive a boost in July 2012, thanks to a LINK Up Illinois advertisement produced for Experimental Station by CBS Broadcasting Company's Community Partnership Division. The 30-second advertisement was targeted at a low-income audience in the Chicago viewing area, and encouraged viewers to use their LINK cards to purchase fresh and healthy foods at farmers markets, where they could also double their purchases through LINK Up Illinois' Double Value Coupon Program. With financial support from The Chicago Community Trust, the advertisement ran 101 times on CBS' Channel 2 in July, triggering noticeable increases in LINK sales at markets throughout the Chicago area and suburbs. These increases are continuing even though the advertisement is no longer being aired.

LINK Up Illinois has clearly demonstrated its potential role as a means of redirecting LINK dollars away from unhealthy and empty calories purchased at supermarket chains toward purchases of healthy foods produced by local farmers, helping to reduce obesity and other diet-related disease, build local agriculture and stimulate local economies. Low-income customers, farmers, and state and federal policy makers all recognize the 'win-win-win' that LINK Up Illinois represents.

Experimental Station is optimistic about the possibility of sustaining Double Value Coupon Program funding through changes in federal food and farm policy. Along with strategic partner Wholesome Wave, and other Wholesome Wave partners nationwide, we have been able in only three years to demonstrate with sufficient force the benefits of Double Value nutrition incentives such that the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have both included Double Value nutrition incentives in their respective versions of the 2012 Farm Bill. The Senate has included \$20 million per year, while the House has included \$5 million per year. The Experimental Station has provided advice and specific language to U.S. Congressman Tim Johnson (R), who introduced the language into the House version of the Bill to include the nutrition incentives. On both sides of the political aisle, our political leaders are demonstrating unanimous support for the program.

Analysis and Interpretation

Experimental Station's work with Double Value Coupon Programs, and the expansion of our effort through LINK Up Illinois, has had a significant impact in a very short time. As the inclusion of nutrition incentives in the 2012 Farm Bill indicates, the data collected by markets offering Double Value Coupon Programs over the past four years—and

consolidated by partner Wholesome Wave—has told a compelling story about the need for such incentives to enable low-income customers to afford the fresh and healthy foods sold at farmers markets.

LINK Up Illinois has received support from Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon who recognizes the power of access and affordability in altering food choices among low-income Illinoisans. As a result of our work through LINK Up Illinois, Experimental Station has played a key role in the implementation of Illinois' Wireless EBT Technology For Farmers Markets project. Undertaken in partnership with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the Illinois Farmers Market Association, and Southern Illinois University, the Experimental Station has provided training to all of the 50 Illinois farmers market recipients of the federal funds.

In June 2012, Executive Director Connie Spreen met with Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and discussed how LINK Up Illinois could help to bring low-income customers to new City-run farmers markets located in Chicago 'food desert' areas. Most recently, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin demonstrated interest in the program, visiting the Experimental Station to learn more about our work. It is clear to all parties that Double Value Coupon Program incentives, spent in conjunction with providing LINK acceptance at farmers markets, have the potential of rebuilding linkages between local food producers and low-income Illinoisans. Ultimately, over time, these linkages can result in a real transformation of consumer purchasing behavior, as more low-income Illinoisans discover a greater sense of wellness from eating fresh and healthy foods. We can also foresee that these linkages will help to transform local agricultural production in Illinois, as more of the \$2 billion of federal funding to support Illinois' LINK program ends up in the pockets of small, local agricultural producers.

Experimental Station has become the leader in Illinois in assisting farmers markets to implement innovative programming to bring low-income customers to their markets. As such, we have come to play an active role in the development of the Illinois Farmers Market Association. Our LINK Up Illinois program manager, Corey Chatman, is currently President of the Association.

Communications/Media

June 27, 2012—Executive Director Connie Spreen spoke about LINK Up Illinois' Double Value Coupon Program and the inclusion of nutrition incentives in the Farm Bill on WBEZ' "Afternoon Shift" program with Steve Edwards.

July 20, 2012—Connie Spreen spoke about LINK Up Illinois at the National Lieutenant Governors Association meeting held in Chicago.

July 2012, Experimental Station executive director Connie Spreen participated in a USDA media call with Lt. Governor Sheila Simon and Audrey Rowe, LINK Administrator for the Food and Nutrition Service.

CBS Broadcasting produced and televised a 30-second commercial for LINK Up Illinois. The television advertisement ran 101 times from July 2-22, 2012. The advertisement may be viewed at dialeidin.com/cbschicago23/EXPERIMENTAL

LINK Up Illinois 2012 Participating markets

61st Street Farmers Market
Andersonville Farmers Market
City of Aurora
 Aurora Farmers Market-Central
 Aurora Farmers Market-East
 Aurora Farmers Market-West
Bronzeville Community Market
Chicago Botanical Garden Green Youth Farm
 Lawndale Market
 North Chicago Market
 Washington Park Market
City of Chicago Farmers Markets
 Austin Town Hall
 Beverly
 Bridgeport
 Columbus Park
 Daley Plaza
 Division Street
 Federal Plaza
 Healing Temple Church
 Hyde Park
 La Follette Park
 Lincoln Square
 Mount Ebenezer Church
 Pullman
 South Shore
 Wicker Park & Bucktown
Covenant Bank Farmers Market
Downtown Bloomington Farmers Market
Fresh Moves Mobile Produce Bus
Glenwood Sunday Market
Green City Market
Growing Home's Wood Street Urban Farm
Illinois Products Farmers Market
Oak Park Farmers Market
Old Capitol Farmers Market
Old General Store Farmers Market
Pekin Main Street Farmers Market
Peoria Riverfront Market
Urbana's Market at the Square
Woodstock Farmers Market

Responses From Participating Markets

Several LINK Up Illinois participating markets provided feedback on the program:

"The first night of implementing LINK Up surpassed the first eight weeks of the market combined. But that was not the biggest surprise of the evening. What stuck with me was the amount of gratitude LINK cardholders expressed for offering double value funds. The benefit recipients were so grateful to purchase local and fresh produce."—Kristi Jones, Market Manager, Illinois Products Farmers Market, Springfield

"Through the generous support of Link Up Illinois, our markets have reached a greater customer base, experienced an increase in LINK sales, and improved the access to healthy, fresh produce in underserved Chicago communities."—Laura Erickson, Market Manager, Green Youth Farm, Chicago

"Our first several months of [offering LINK] showed sustained growth in 2010; however our Market really didn't see significant growth in LINK sales until we were awarded the LINK Up Illinois grant monies in 2011. The grant encouraged us to promote the market by reaching out to social service agencies such as CEDA-WIC, the Oak Park Housing Authority, Oak Park Township Senior Services, PCC Wellness Center, The Children's Clinic, and approximately 19 day care centers in Oak Park and surrounding communities. The outreach paid off...in 2011, our LINK and Double Coupon sales grew to an astonishing \$7,572.96, so much more than we had anticipated."—Michael T. Charley, Market Liaison, Oak Park Farmers Market

"I have not talked to one person, be it vendor, customer, or community supporter who didn't think LINK Up Illinois was a wonderful idea."—Keith Johnson, Market Manager, Woodstock Farmers Market

Responses from LINK Up Illinois Customers

"I was wondering if there are still matching funds available for LINK purchases. I was diagnosed with Hodgkins Lymphoma in April, but have been unable to follow a strict diet of local/organic fruits and vegetables due to the high cost. This program is a Godsend for people in my position."—Rosetta McPherson

"Last Tuesday I cried at the Lincoln Square Market when I found out the details about the Link Up Illinois Program. Now I am truly making the most of the benefit granted. So far this week, I've been to the Lincoln Square and Division Street Markets. Twenty extra dollars, after having my SNAP benefits cut in half this summer, means a great deal to me."—Meryl Kleiman