

The **Woodstock Farmers Market** of Woodstock, IL received \$13,847 to set up an EBT system at the market by purchasing equipment, including wireless terminals, permanent metal tokens, a computer bookkeeping system, and buying promotional items and materials.

[Final Report FY10](#)

2010 FMPP Final Performance Report

Date: *February 7, 2013*

Recipient Name: **Woodstock Farmers Market NFP**

Title of Project: *Increasing local food production and consumption*

Grant Number: *IL-040-2010-G-1150*

Location: *Woodstock, Illinois 60098*

Project Summary *This project was to increase the amount of food stamp sales in our market and therefore increase our local farmer's sales and production. We lacked the funds to set this project up. We needed wireless EBT machines, a tent, advertising funds to attract customers and start up fees for personnel and EBT charges. We knew there were 18 million dollars given out in food stamps in our county in 2009 and we were not able to accept them.*

The biggest purchase was the wireless EBT machines. They cost \$3752 for six of them. We bought a good tent which we are still using for \$580. We spent \$750 on advertising, \$500 to set up an online accounting system and another \$200 on signage. Tokens were \$418. Personnel costs and EBT fee charges were both high because of the volume of sales which was a good thing. We used \$3250 from the grant for EBT operation and \$2389 for fees and that helped us to defray those two costs.

The benefits of the grant were greater than we anticipated. We had \$849 in food stamp sales in 2010. In 2011 they increased to \$7323, in 2012 food stamp sales increased to \$11,480. This is good, but the big surprise was our credit card sales, which we had not anticipated. In 2010 our credit card sales were \$15,048. In 2011 with the new machines our credit card sales jumped to \$46,559, and in 2012 credit card sales topped out at \$92,500. Our total credit sales (includes food stamps and credit card) rose 339% in 2011 and another 193% in 2012. For the two years of the grant our credit sales rose 654%.

We conduct a customer count each summer on a Saturday in July. In 2012 we had 500 more customers than in 2010. This is just one day, but we do an accurate count, only counting adults and customers entering the market. We expanded our season to include the winter market in 2011 in a new location at the local Farm Bureau during November and December. In 2012 we expanded again to include not only November and December, but one Saturday market in January, February, March and April which is going very well. Our Spring market will start in May.

Project Approach

The general goal of this project was to increase the customer base of our market by enabling our farmers to accept food stamps and credit sales. Our strategy was to purchase EBT machines, tokens, to advertise, get signage, a tent and increase the hours of our booth worker so we could accept link transactions.

We researched machines and credit processors and decided to use First Data and the FD 400 wireless terminals. We also got a maintenance agreement for the machines. If one is broken, we send it in and get a replacement in two days.

We made arrangements with our booth worker (Don Humbertson) to work the extra hours so that our Information booth was open whenever the Farmers Market was open to encourage food stamp, credit and token sales. He is also responsible for the EBT machines, and keeping records of each vendor's credit sales.

We purchased an online book keeping system with Quick Books online. This system is connected directly to our EBT bank account. All transactions are recorded and categorized so we can report credit sales by vendor. This is about \$500 a year, but we could not do credit sales without it, and it enables us to keep track of EBT and credit sales for reporting purposes. An added benefit is that we run our General Farmers Market accounting using the same system and all officers of our board can access the records.

In the spring of 2011 we gave EBT machines to the top selling farmers in our market and kept one in the information booth for EBT sales and token sales. Don Humbertson trains vendors on their use and gives the machines out at the beginning of each market and collects them at the end of the market. He then closes them down and records sales for each farmer.

We had signs made and laminated for each vendor in our market so customers would know they accept tokens or have the credit machines available. We also purchased a banner and signage for our information booth. We contacted our local Department of Human Services, churches, and family services center to let them know of our new program.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

- *6 EBT terminals were purchased and installed for the 2011 season at the Farmers Market, and used in the 2012 market.*
- *A training session for market vendors was held on May 1, 2011. Individual training was held as new vendors were issued machines.*
- *Advertising before and during the market season for EBT availability was carried out via signs at the market, a notice in the county newspaper, notices on our web page and facebook account.*
- *The market established an online book keeping system that is secure and gives accurate data on market income and expenditures.*
- *Increased credit sales at the market.*

Beneficiaries.

- *Low income customers from McHenry County now have access to wholesome food.*
- *Farmers had an increase in sales. We don't require individual sales figures, but increased credit sales, leaves more money for cash purchases.*
- *Increased foot traffic at the market benefits the farmers.*
- *EBT sales increased \$6474 in the 2011 season, while overall credit sales at the market increased by \$37,985*
- *EBT sales increased another \$4157 in 2012 and while overall credit sales at the market increased another \$50,098*

Lessons Learned.

- *We found credit purchases were higher for the higher value items such as meats and cheeses and packaged blueberries. It was not as helpful for the small vegetable vendor to use as their sales were at a lower amount and credit was not needed. Our EBT machines ended up with the farmer selling higher valued items.*
- *It was challenging to compensate the booth worker for extra hours worked and to pay the credit processing fees. Total 2012 fees for EBT were \$ 3294. I had initially budgeted \$1530 for the two years. Total Booth worker compensation for 2012 was \$4660, we initially had budgeted \$2120 for both years of EBT work. 90% of the booth workers time is spent on credit transactions.*
- *An unexpected positive result was the increase in credit and debit card sales. We only were thinking of food stamps when we initiated the program.*
- *I wish we could have started the program a few years earlier.*

Additional Information:

Another thing we did to increase EBT sales was apply for a Double Coupon Grant in 2011. We were accepted and also received funds in 2012. We plan to continue this program in 2013. We started in 2011 matching the first \$15 of food stamp purchases and ended the program in 2012 matching the first \$10 of food stamp purchases.

In 2013 our local bank is going to donate \$500 to help support this program. Each bank is required to do some community support and the double coupon program fits their requirement. We also had a raffle of farm products with all funds going to the double coupon program.

We have found that Facebook and our web site were extremely helpful in passing the word about our acceptance of food stamps at the market. We hired a media consultant and she sends out a weekly or bi-weekly news report about the market. We have concentrated our publicity on social media with good results.

Contact person:

Your name: Keith Johnson

Your phone: 815-338-5164

Your email: offsquare@gmail.com



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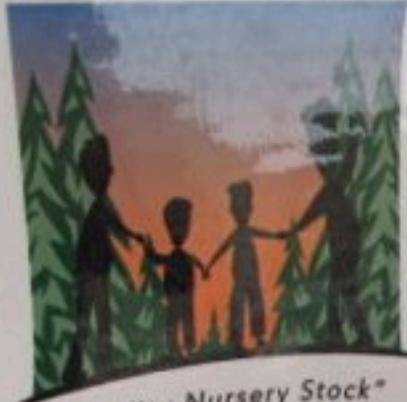


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