

Farmers Market and Gleaning Project

Sandhills Family Heritage Association of Spring Lake, NC received \$31,000 to strengthen and expand the Sandhills Farmers Market in order to provide an effective market place for underserved, limited-resource landowners, farmers, and handcrafters to sell their products and goods. In addition, the project promoted community health and well-being by the development of a community gleaning program tied to the market.

Funds were used to pay for training workshops for farmers market vendors and consumers; travel expenses to and from gleaning fields and workshops; the purchase of market equipment; and development of a website for the market.

Final Report

Final Performance Report

Date: July 25, 2011

Recipient Name: Sandhills Family Heritage Association

Title of Project: FARMERS MARKET AND GLEANING PROJECT

Grant Number: 12-25-G-0732

Location: Spring Lake, NC

Project Summary

The Sandhills Family Heritage Association (SFHA) received a \$31,000 grant from the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program, to strengthen and expand the Sandhills Farmers Market operation, and to help rural under-served and limited resource African American families, in the North Carolina Sandhills Region become more self-reliant through participation in the local Farmers Market. The USDA FMPP grant enabled our organization to develop a marketing and business plan for the farmers market, b) recruit and train farmers, gardeners, and handcrafters to sell their goods at the market; c) provide marketing and market development assistance to farmers, gardeners, crafters and vendors; d) present community education workshops and attend conferences on sustainable farming practices; e) distribute health and nutrition information at the market; f) start a walking club; g) offer free health screenings at the market; h) purchase supplies, farmers market signs and produce scales; l) provide research, training and development, networking opportunities, farm site visits, and marketing assistance, that contributed to start-up of two new businesses. We continued our gleaning activities by donating fresh food and clothing to the needy, home-bound seniors and NC National Guard Family Assistance Program.

Goals: The primary project goal was to improve farmers market operations and provide a sustainable and affordable market place for limited resource landowners, farmers and handcrafters to increase family income and to promote community health and well-being. **Objectives** were to: a) increase the number of farmers market vendors and customers; b) increase the variety and number of products for sale; c) increase the effectiveness of vendors and market operation; and d) expand existing market and develop new markets for low income farmers.

List of Benefits

SFHA now has a 5-year Farmers Market Marketing Plan to promote and guide farmers market activities through year 2014.

People in the Sandhills communities have become more aware of our organization's presence in building the local food system, promotion of **North** Carolina's Healthy Communities initiative and development of community based economics.

SFHA is recognized by community members as a supporter and advocate for rural African Americans and limited resource landowners and farmers as evidenced by increase in phone calls and email inquiries about our farmers market, heritage tours, community education workshops, speaking engagements, and land loss issues.

Sandhills Farmers Market vendors have an affordable location where they can sell their products and goods every Saturday from June through October, SFHA provides free marketing and promotion of farmers market vendors and free training and education through monthly workshops and conferences.

Vendors received increase in family income and customers, and free sales and customer service training.

Consumers and Community members have access to local growers, fresh locally grown produce, cooking classes and demonstrations, free health screenings such as high blood pressure, diabetes, weight, and healthy recipes and nutritional information. People were encouraged to buy local produce and those who had not previously been to the market were motivated to come out. The community also benefited from free monthly workshops that addressed local economic, environmental, social, and cultural issues that impact our lives.

Project Approach

Goal-1: Improve and expand operation of the Sandhills Farmers Market.

Objective-1: Create a sustainable and affordable market where limited resource farmers and handcrafters can sell their products and goods from June through October.

Strategy-1: Develop a marketing and business plan for the market.

Activities-1:

- a) Write a 5-year marketing and business plan to expand and promote the Sandhills Farmers Market;
- b) Increase the variety of products and goods sold at the market;
- c) Recruit new growers and farmers market vendors; d) increase the type of activities offered at the market; involve more children and young people in market activities;
- e) Develop new project partnerships; and
- f) Provide farm site visits, community workshops, conferences, and other training and education to enhance skills of farmers market vendors.

Goal-2: Increase economic viability and sustainability of the Sandhills Farmers Market.

Objective-2: More vendors and customers participating in the market.

Strategy-2:

- a) Make announcements on TV and radio;
- b) Make farmers market announcements in local churches;
- c) Distribute market flyers and newsletters in local businesses;
- d) Advertise market on website, blog and facebook;
- e) Purchase farmers market signs,;

- f) Get media coverage of special events;
- g) Create kids day activities at the market; and
- h) Develop new partnerships to expand products and goods offered.
- h) Promotion of the Sandhills Farmers Market.

Activities:

- a) Develop working relationship with area Newspapers, TV and radio stations;
- b) Get feature articles in newspapers

Goal-3: Promote healthy communities and community-based economics.

Objective-3: To encourage daily servings of fruits and vegetables and support of Sandhills Farmers Market as a source for locally grown food.

Strategy-3: Provide fresh locally grown foods in low income community.

Activities-3:

- a) Distribute diet and nutrition information at the market;
- b) Offer cooking demonstration classes;
- c) Provide free health screenings;
- d) Start a walking club;
- e) Offer food handling and safety classes;
- f) Offer classes in how to preserve fresh food for year-round use; and
- g) Partner with local community groups and organizations to promote community-wide health and fitness.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

SFHA achievements include a Sandhills Farmers Market Marketing Plan 2009-2014, new partnerships with area universities that allow us to give service credit to students who volunteer to work at the market; a Kids Day at the Market as a once-a-month event to provide free fun and educational activities for children age 3 – 12. We provided cooking demonstrations by Fayetteville Technical Community College Chef-instructor and his culinary students, verbal how-to information, and free samples were handed out to customers. This was very popular service. Cumberland County Beekeepers Association and the Herb Lady provided farmers market vendors and customers with information on beekeeping and growing herbs.

Two of Sandhills Farmers Market vendors started their own business enterprise. SFHA contributed to the start-up of an agri-tourism family farm and a hot sauce business by providing training and development, farm site visits, research, media coverage, marketing assistance, and networking opportunities for the new entrepreneurs.

SFHA implemented the NC 10 percent Campaign, a Center for Environmental Farm Systems initiative that helps build North Carolina's local food economy by supporting NC farmers, businesses, and communities. We ask community members to pledge to spend at least 10 percent of their existing food dollars at the Sandhills Farmers Market. SFHA also recently joined the USDA/CNPP

Nutrition Communicators Network and started a healthy community outreach program to encourage people to follow the USDA 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

SFHA developed new partnerships that expanded our services to include free health screenings at the market and a walking club. a) we increased the variety of products and goods sold at the market; and b) recruited new growers and farmers market vendors; c) involved more children and young people in market activities; and d) provided community education workshops, conferences, and other training and education to enhance skills of farmers market vendors.

We continued our gleaning activities through donation of fresh food and clothing to the sick, needy, and home-bound senior citizens.

Beneficiaries.

SFHA received a \$31,000 USDA FMPP grant to promote the Sandhills Farmers Market and help rural low income families increase their income.

Sandhills farmers, gardeners, and handcrafters increased their family income by selling products and goods at the farmers market. Two families succeeded in starting their small business.

Children age 3-12 -- SFHA offers a venue to other organizations to provide free outreach and education to the community. We created Kids Day at the Market as a once-a-month event held at the market where local organizations set up at the market and provide free fun and educational activities for local children. Participating groups and organizations were: Cumberland County Library, NC Partnership for Children, Fascinate U Children's Museum, and the Cumberland County Health Department.

Seventeen Fayetteville State University Department of History students earned credits for their oral history class project that included interviews with six of our farmers market volunteers.

Three FSU students earned service credit for their volunteer work at the market. Youth now have a venue for gaining volunteers hours that colleges and universities look for on applications, in addition, students benefit from real life work experience such in sales and customer service.

Fayetteville Technical Community College Culinary Department instructor and eighteen students used our farmers market to conduct cooking demonstrations using fresh produce and herbs to display their culinary skills while earning class credit.

Cumberland County Beekeepers Association-- benefited from being at the Sandhills Farmers Market by making money from honey and honey-based product sales. They also were able to expand their efforts in educating the community about the necessity and the plight of honey bees.

The Town of Spring Lake reaps economic benefits from having the only farmers market in town that draws in people from surrounding areas.

The Sandhills community and surrounding areas have access to fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables, free health screenings, a walking club, and free community education workshops on health and nutrition.

The following organizations and groups benefited from the FMPP Grant as project partners who helped us provide additional services to the farmers and community members.

Fayetteville Observer Newspaper—three feature articles on SFHA-The Organization, hot sauce business vendor, and family farm vendor.

Cooperative Extension outreach education to community.
Bethel Church Health Ministry Outreach—Free health screenings

The Herb Lady benefited by expanding her market, increasing sales and profits, having an opportunity to educate consumers in a different geographic area about her agritourism farm which is open to the general public with the potential of increasing her market share, and publicizing upcoming events on her farm.

Lessons Learned

SFHA learned that the collaborative efforts of funders, local community leaders, volunteers, businesses, churches, and educational institutions can truly make positive life-changing impact in the lives of those who have limited resources and want to help themselves.

Challenges: Helping rural low-income families become more self-reliant is the mission of SFHA. When our landowners and farmers become successful in their own farm-related business, it has been conceived by some as competition for our organization, and by others that the organization was successful in accomplishing the mission.