

Expanding Markets for Local Farmers with Innovative Partnerships and Networking via the Mobile Farmers' Market

Rural Resources, Inc. of Greenville, TN, received \$55,404 to improve and promote a Mobile Farmers Market through tastings, cooking demonstrations, and cooking classes using local food; and to enhance market sales through an online ordering system. Funds were used to purchase promotional materials and radio ads; conduct cooking demonstrations and classes; design a website and purchase software; refit a bus for basket deliveries; and pay for market equipment, computers and a generator.

Final Report

Final Performance Report

Date: July 7, 2011

Recipient Name: Rural Resources

Title of Project: Rural Resource's Mobile Farmers' Market

Grant Number: 12-25-G-0751

Location: Greeneville, Tennessee

Project Summary: Rural Resource's Mobile Farmers' Market requested funding so that the sales and income of local farmers were increased. Our goal was also to increase the consumption of locally produced foods. Neighborhoods lacking in transportation were offered the opportunity of purchasing farm fresh food as the Mobile Farmers' Market rolled into their neighborhoods on a weekly basis.

Project Approach:

The Mobile Farmers' Market was begun and initially piloted in the late summer of 2005. It is an all-local food farmers' market on wheels that carries vegetables, eggs and frozen meats into low-income neighborhoods that often lack in transportation. In addition to servicing neighborhoods where transportation is an issue, the Mobile Market makes stops at other high traffic selling points that the general public can access. The market also coordinates orders and deliveries of Local Food Baskets.

Our approach to attaining the goals of this project, **To increase sales and income of local farmers by increasing consumption of locally produced foods**, began by improving an already established website, fromthefarm.net. The website was utilized as a base for advertising our farmers and the agricultural products that they produced. Improvements were made so that ordering and paying for a local foods basket on-line was easy and simple, raising the sales of the products and increasing income for the farmers.

Another approach to attaining the goals of our project was to establish relationships and agreements for servicing churches, schools, hospitals, and families. Various relationships were established during the time frame of this grant including relationships between churches, schools, and hospitals. The Mobile Farmers' market route began to include stopping by a church each Wednesday night after their service allowing the congregation to purchase fresh from the farm foods. Although we have yet to sell a substantial amount to the school system, we have been able to get our foot in the door and continue to work towards the mutual goal of being able to supply the children in our school system with some fresh foods. A bit of great news is that we did sell produce to a hospital during this time and have since established a relationship with another hospital resulting in steady long term sales.

Physical improvements on the infrastructure of the Mobile Farmers' Market were also made during this time. A quieter more efficient generator was purchased allowing the market to be more customer friendly. Shelves were put in place allowing for better display of the produce.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved Several goals and outcomes were achieved during the grant period. These include three relationships that were established between institutions, schools and hospitals, resulting in increased sales for the farmers. A cash register was put on the Mobile Farmers' Market allowing for the better tracking of purchasing and sales.

- 100 radio spots were played before and during the season announcing our ability to accept EBT cards.
- 5 Outreach to Neighborhood Parties were held giving the residents a chance to taste fresh new foods.

The radio spots resulted in an increase in EBT sales for the season allowing folks in the low income neighborhoods the opportunity to sign up for weekly baskets of produce and foods. Sales and traffic to the Mobile Market increased after the parties with folks reporting that they heard of us because of either the radio announcements or the Outreach parties.

Beneficiaries:

- The beneficiaries of this project include farmers who were given another means to sell food that they produced increasing their farm income.
- Customers of all incomes, but especially in public housing and low income neighborhoods because of the easier access to locally produced foods.
- Churches and the local Hospitals benefitted from this project by being able to offer fresh foods to their congregation and employees.

Lessons Learned: The unforeseen challenges that we came across while implementing this project was getting our generator configured to work the appliances on the Mobile Farmers' Market. Challenges also came in the form of weather as we have learned that the weather really needs to cooperate to allow us the most sales. There were many positive results and especially in the low income neighborhoods. Much talk and excitement surrounding the concept of "community gardening" really helped folks to grasp the importance of learning about their food and where and how their food originates.

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