

Community Food System Project, Phase II

The **Jefferson Area Board for Aging** of Charlottesville, Virginia received \$56,761 to provide needed food storage, and to develop a system that supplied produce to food banks and distribution centers from area farmers markets. The goal was to connect low-income residents and senior citizens with fresh, local produce.

[Final Report FY09](#)



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August 25, 2011

Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA)
Community Food System Project, Phase II
VA 481 2009
Charlottesville, Virginia

Final Report

Dear FMPP Team,

It's hard to believe we're writing our final report for the 2009 grant, and we have already completed the feasibility study for the 2010 grant. To me this shows the momentum our local food system projects have and the growth USDA FMPP has supported in our area.

Ultimately the USDA FMPP grants have led to increased awareness of healthy food options, greater access to healthy fresh foods, a thriving local food system to preserve our community's agricultural livelihood, and just as important, job creation.

Phase II of JABA's Community Food System Project focused on building systems to connect local produce to low-income residents in Charlottesville and the surrounding counties. Our main goals were to increase access of low-income individuals to nutritious, fresh produce at farmers markets, and to educate low-income communities of the benefits and availability of local produce. Specifically, the project (1) created a farmers market **local currency** system benefitting low income residents, (2) established a **gleaning** system for distributing leftover produce from the weekly farmers market to low-income residents and seniors, and (3) expanded JABA's ability to provide local produce in its senior meal program **year round** rather than just seasonally.

While USDA did not fund JABA's EBT program, we did receive a grant from Wholesome Wave Foundation to implement EBT at the city market. Administering these two grants at the same time allowed us to reach a larger audience of economically distressed individuals—those receiving SNAP benefits (using EBT) as well as those *ineligible* for SNAP but still needing help with their food expenses (using local currency).

Accomplishments and Beneficiaries

Local Currency at city farmers market

- Benefits "working poor" and their families; i.e., those *not* eligible for SNAP benefits.
- Donations from several local organizations support this program, which when spent, benefits local farmers who sell to these clients.
- The community benefits economically because local money is cycled back into the local economy.
- Our nurses distributing local currency is like writing a prescription for a healthy diet; recipients benefit from better health, which in turn puts less strain on our national health system.

"To promote, establish and preserve sustainable communities for healthy aging that benefit individuals and families of all ages."



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Gleaning at city farmers market and area farms

- With the purchase of a new display refrigerator for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, the food bank can accept fresh produce donations from area farms and distribute it to needy recipients.
- Leftover produce from the farmers market goes to support free meal programs in the area, for example, Salvation Army, the Haven Homeless Day Shelter, and Food Not Bombs
- JABA also uses gleaned produce in its meal programs for seniors and child day care centers.
- A group of ladies from a low-income minority neighborhood is using some of the gleaned items for canning, as a means to learn a skill and start a small business. They use the JABA kitchen, canning products from a Ball grant, and gleaned items that can be canned.
- Food is not wasted, and the farmers appreciate that the food is being used.

Freezer storage for JABA kitchen

- The freezer storage unit allows us to purchase more produce during harvesting months, blanch and freeze it for serving in the winter. Seniors and preschoolers in JABA's meal program enjoy year-round local produce that tastes fresh and provides good nutrition.
- Ability to purchase more local foods benefits area farmers and the local economy.
- The addition of freezer storage space has taken us to the next step of wanting to make local produce available on the State level—through the creation of a flash freezing facility for local food, which will benefit colleges, public schools, nursing homes, and hospitals.

Lessons Learned & Continued Challenges

- Effectively engaging communities is a very difficult task, and success lies in the approach. As community planners we are not in a position to “fix” communities, but rather find out how to engage individuals in improving their lives by understanding what improvement means to *them*.
- Throughout our local food efforts we have discovered how *un*-nutritional the food is that is served in public schools. The ignorance of what is served falls on not only the parents and students, but also faculty and school boards. Luckily we have a group of rowdy parents in Charlottesville that are bringing school nutrition to the forefront.
- Our biggest challenge still remains--how do we get more people to the farmers market? Incentives are effective only temporarily, as recipients say they go only to use local currency or SNAP double vouchers. Otherwise they cannot afford the food. This is why we think it is so important to make local food available in institutional feeding programs, thus, the feasibility study for the flash freezing operation.

While the grant period may be over for FMPP 2009, JABA will continue to spread the effects of this funding for several years, as local food projects and entrepreneurial ventures continue to move forward benefitting local communities, farmers and individuals.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

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