

FEAST Farmers' Market Promotion Program

Ashland County, Wisconsin received \$22,581 to add EBT capabilities at eight mobile markets and one farmers market; promote EBT capabilities at these markets with advertising and signage; and further the growth of the *Veggin' Out* nutritional program for youth. Funds were used to purchase two EBT terminals; provide EBT training for the farmers market and at the mobile markets; pay for advertising and signage; and buy market equipment and training for the Youth Garden.

Final Report

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FEAST Farmers' Market Promotion Project, Ashland County, University of Wisconsin Extension September 2010

The FEAST Farmers' Market Promotion Project was successful in improving fresh food accessibility to low-income residents in Ashland and Bayfield Counties as well as providing crucial support for the growth of regional Farmers' Markets. Ashland County UW-Extension would like to thank the USDA Food Nutrition Services for providing the crucial funding and support that allowed this project to happen.

Situation

As described in our 2008 application, "the Chequamegon Bay region is a very diverse area that includes two federally recognized Indian tribes (Bad River and Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa), a significant population of second homeowners, and those who live in the region year round. Because the region is known as a vacation destination, many of the jobs are found in the service industry. According to 2003 data from the US Department of Commerce, both Ashland and Bayfield Counties experience a per capita personal income (PCPI) rate well below that of the state. While the PCPI rate for Ashland County is \$23,204 and Bayfield County is \$22,660, the PCPI rate for the state of Wisconsin is \$30,685. Moreover, Ashland County has a poverty rate of 15.4% and Bayfield County has a poverty rate of 13.9%. On the Red Cliff Reservation poverty is even more prevalent and the median income is \$11,272 with 49% of the community living at or below the poverty level. In a 2003 survey, 41% of WIC recipients in Bayfield County reported being food insecure and 15% of those as being food insecure with hunger."



Nutrition Education at Ashland Market

The recession of 2008-2009 put further stress on many households in the region with unemployment rising to near 10%. Currently, every elementary school in Ashland and Bayfield County have 50% or more of their children qualifying for free and reduced lunches. The local food shelf has experienced over 30% growth in the number of families seeking food assistance over the past year.



FoodShare customer purchases honey with token at Ashland Area Farmers Market

At the same time, there are growing community assets and responses to this need. Community gardens have been started in at least six local communities, local Farmers and market gardeners have been increasing production, Farmers' markets are doing well and efforts of concerned citizens are helping those in need. The Farmers' Market Promotion grant was sought to assist in these efforts. Specifically, we planned to use the grant to introduce EBT technology to the Ashland Farmers' Market and the Mobile Farmers' market so that low-income people in the region can access fresh, local produce. We further planned to increase promotion of the markets, especially to low-income people, and to increase the ability of market customers to prepare nutritious meals from local produce.

Program Activities

To implement the goals of the project we hired a part-time coordinator who worked with our VISTA volunteer and our UWEX staff. They collaborated with the Farmers' Market board and the coordinator of the Mobile Farmers' Market to develop plans for EBT implementation and promotion activities. The EBT equipment was ordered, procedures established, agreements with agencies were worked out, staff and volunteers were trained, and the program was implemented in 2009. Promotional materials, signage, banners and other items were purchased and volunteers were recruited to serve as guest chefs at the markets.

Toward the end of the 2009 market season, we realized that we had accomplished the goals set out in the grant program, and yet we had considerable funds left in the grant. Some grant activities that we had budgeted for had been provided by volunteers, and our coordinator was very frugal in her expenditures. With a projected balance, we sought approval to extend the program to two other markets in our region and to do additional marketing activities. This request was approved and in 2010, we sought to complete these additional tasks. Our coordinator was able to lay the ground work for the new sites; however, details and final implementation were left to our VISTA volunteer and other staff. We ran into several challenges in the second phase of the project which delayed our plans. The delays will be described below under lessons learned. We have gotten the additional EBT equipment and related materials and have trained staff in their use. Unfortunately, this came together near the end of the market season. Complete implementation will begin next season.



Buttons promoting local markets.

Project Partners

Contributors to this project include Ashland County UW-Extension, which served as the primary support agency throughout the FEAST Farmers' Market Promotion Project. Ashland County was the financial agent overseeing the project account. Ashland Area Farmers' Market Board members and treasurer were integral to establishing long-term sustainability of the project. A special thank you to the Farmers' Market Managers who were flexible and patient with the pilot year of accepting FoodShare. Americorps VISTA Kristy Heidenreich and FEAST volunteers wrote the grant for the project and did preliminary research. The Ashland Chamber of Commerce lent assistance. With the added markets, the Farmers' Market volunteers for the Bayfield and Cornucopia markets were helpful and very patient as we worked through the process. Finally, Carrie Welter, the EBT Coordinator was essential in getting a great start for the program. The Ashland Farmers' Market board has now taken over complete responsibility for the EBT program and with a little assistance next season from our staff, the other two markets should be able to do the same.

Results, Benefits & Conclusions

The impact of the EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) Program has been substantial, benefiting both FoodShare recipients and vendors at the Ashland Area Farmers' Market and the Mobile Farmers' Markets. The community members who were most impacted by the implementation of this project include FoodShare recipients in Ashland and Bayfield Counties, local Farmers' that were able to accept FoodShare tokens, and all community members and chefs that participated in the Veggin' Out cooking demonstrations.



Customer using EBT at Ashland Market

The Ashland Farmers' Market occurs on Saturday mornings from mid-June to mid-October. The Mobile Market travels to provide five rural communities access to locally grown produce. This includes Odanah and Red Cliff, which are Mobile Market sites on Native American reservations. The second phase markets are located in Bayfield and Cornucopia.

The effects of the implementation of EBT at market in the first pilot season were very positive. At the Ashland and Mobile Farmers' Markets, EBT sales totaled \$1694. from 66 total EBT transactions. As the 2010 market season is not yet finished, we do not have final numbers for this season yet. The EBT Project Coordinator recruited local chefs and nutrition educators to conduct three food preparation demonstrations on-site at 2009 Ashland Area Farmers' Market in a program called Veggin' Out. Community members were able to sample new recipes as the experienced cooks shared simple tips for buying and simple ways to use fresh produce. A Veggin' Out Food Demonstration guide was developed, which includes food safety information. Several similar programs were offered in 2010.

Marketing materials were developed for the Farmers' markets including signage, murals on the mobile market van and a variety of smaller items. See the photos for some examples.

Perhaps the most significant conclusion regarding the program is that the people managing the local markets have committed to taking over the EBT program and making it sustainable. We will continue to assist them as needed, and to look for ways to spread the impact.

Lessons Learned

We ran into several challenges in the implementation process. The first was the delay at the State about our paperwork, which in turn delayed our federal SNAP application. The second problem arose when we began using EBT at the Mobile Farmers' Market. The Mobile Market serves rural communities and some of these areas do not get adequate cell phone reception, which is necessary for EBT transactions with our wireless terminals. The EBT Project Coordinator handled the troubleshooting with the help of eFunds tech support and Radio Shack representatives to find the best possible technology to help maximize reception. We purchased a pre-paid cell phone in order to perform paper voucher transactions at the locations where we cannot get reception for the wireless terminal. Because of the delay in the paperwork, we weren't able to begin EBT at the Mobile Farmers' Market until July 4, 2009.



In the second phase of the project, we thought we had most of the potential problems anticipated, but new ones arose. After several delays in getting paperwork approved and the EBT machines, we received the machines only to find out the wrong equipment was shipped. Working with smaller, less established markets also presented some challenges. We are confident that these issues will be worked out.

Perhaps the biggest lesson learned when trying to implement a grant funded project with multiple state and federal partners is that it is going to take more time than anticipated. We were extremely fortunate to hire an exceptional person to coordinate the program and to have the assistance of our VISTA volunteer.



Painted Mobile Farmers Market truck & Manager Jan Karlen

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Thank you again for providing funding for the FEAST Farmers' Market Promotion Program.



Close-up of vegetables on Mobile Market truck

EBT Project Coordinator Final Report:
FEAST Farmers Market Promotion Project
Ashland County, University of Wisconsin Extension
December 2009

Summary of Activities

The FEAST Farmers Market Promotion Project was successful in improving fresh food accessibility to low-income residents in Ashland County as well as providing crucial support for the growth of regional Farmers Markets. Ashland County UW Extension would like to thank the USDA Food Nutrition Services for providing the crucial funding and support that allowed this project to happen.

The impact of the EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) program has been substantial, benefiting both FoodShare recipients and vendors at the Ashland Area Farmers Market and the Mobile Farmers Markets. The community members who were most impacted by the implementation of this project include FoodShare recipients in Ashland and Bayfield counties, local farmers that were able to accept FoodShare tokens, and all community members and chefs that participated in the Veggin' Out cooking demonstrations.

The Ashland Farmers Market occurs on Saturday mornings on the 200 block of Chapple Ave. from mid-June to mid-October. The Mobile Market travels to provide five rural communities access to locally grown produce. This includes Odanah and Red Cliff, which are Mobile Market sites on Native American reservations.



FoodShare customer purchases honey with token at Ashland Area Farmers Market

Achievements

All program goals were met or exceeded within the first six months of the grant allowing the original scope of the project to be expanded. This document covers the work conducted by the EBT Project Coordinator from April through December 2009. These expanded objectives include supporting neighboring markets in purchasing EBT equipment and supplies and sending a mailing to all FoodShare recipients in Ashland and Bayfield counties through the state of Wisconsin Health and Human Services.

The effects of the implementation of EBT at market in the first pilot season have been very positive. At the Ashland and Mobile Farmers Markets, EBT sales totaled \$1694.20 from 66 total EBT transactions.

The EBT Project Coordinator recruited local chefs and nutrition educators to conduct three food preparation demonstrations on-site at Ashland Area Farmers Market in a program called Veggin' Out. Community members were able to sample new recipes as the experienced cooks shared simple tips for buying and simple ways to use fresh produce. A Veggin' Out Food Demonstration guide was developed, which includes food safety information.

Lessons Learned

One lesson gained from this project is that although there was a great deal of media outreach and publicity on the project, the Mobile Market sales remained low. The numbers did go up slightly throughout the season, but sales were low. This illustrates that it takes community acceptance and the importance of word of mouth to spread awareness about the ability to utilize Quest cards at Farmers Markets. The first chart illustrates the total EBT sales at Ashland Area Farmers Market as well as the value of tokens redeemed by vendors and the cumulative balance of outstanding tokens.

Ashland Area Farmers Market Total EBT Season Sales
(July 4th-October 10th)

Market Month	Total EBT Sales from Season	Total Value of Tokens Redeemed by Vendors	Cumulative balance of outstanding tokens
July	\$537.00	\$447.00	\$90.00
August	\$454.00	\$460.00	\$66.00
September	\$497.00	\$482.00	\$99.00
October	\$77.00	\$130.00	\$46.00
Totals	\$1565.00	\$1519.00	\$46.00

Total EBT Sales: \$1565.00

Total Value of Tokens Redeemed by Vendors: \$1519.00

End of Season Value of Outstanding Tokens: \$46.00

The second chart shows the number of Mobile Markets at each location, total transactions and total value of EBT sales.

Mobile Farmers Market EBT Season Totals
(August-October)

Market Location	Total Number of Markets	Total # of Daily EBT Transactions	Total Value of EBT Purchases
Odanah	8	7	54.95
Iron River	3	2	10.00
Red Cliff	4	7	55.00
Glidden	2	0	0
Mellen/Marengo	3	2	9.25
Total:	20	18	\$129.20

Unexpected Delays

We ran into a few points of resistance in the implementation process. The first was the delay at the State about our paperwork, which in turn delayed our federal SNAP application.

The second problem arose when we began using EBT at the Mobile Farmers Market. The Mobile Market serves rural communities and some of these areas do not get adequate cell phone reception, which is necessary for EBT transactions with our wireless terminals.



Painted Mobile Farmers Market truck & Manager Jan Karlen

The EBT Project Coordinator handled the troubleshooting with the help of eFunds tech support and Radio Shack representatives to find the best possible technology to help maximize reception. We purchased a pre-paid cell phone in order to perform paper voucher transactions at the location where we cannot get reception for the wireless

terminal. Because of the delay in the paperwork, we weren't able to begin EBT at Farmers Market until July 4th.

Project Contributors

Contributors to this project include Ashland County UW Extension, which served as the primary support agency throughout the FEAST Farmers Market Promotion Project. Ashland County was the financial agent overseeing the project account. Ashland Area Farmers Market Board members and Treasurer were integral to establishing long-term sustainability of the project. A special thank you to the Farmers Market Managers who were flexible and patient with the pilot year of accepting FoodShare. Americorps Vista Kristy Heidenreich and FEAST volunteers wrote the grant for the project and did preliminary research.

Outline of Future Work

Because the initial Farmers Market Promotion Project was so successful, the remaining grant funds will be used on the following broader objectives as stated in proposal. The project goals were expanded to include supporting Bayfield and Cornucopia Farmers Markets and sending a mailing to FoodShare recipients in Ashland and Bayfield counties in the spring of 2010. This will not only increase awareness of the project, but also expand the markets that accept FoodShare in this region.

The Ashland County Extension Americorps Vista Kristy Heidenreich will provide support for two neighboring Farmers Markets who plan to implement EBT at their markets.

Thank you again for providing funding for the FEAST Farmers Market Promotion Program.



Close-up of vegetables on Mobile Market truck

Additional Information (publications, websites)

Publications:

Mobile Farmers Market now Accepts FoodShare- The Daily Press 8-24-2009

<http://www.ashlandwi.com/articles/2009/08/24/health/doc4a92afcede6c8546572581.txt>

Ashland Area Farmers Market now Accepts FoodShare- The Daily Press 7-7-2009

<http://www.ashlandwi.com/shared-content/search/index.php?search=go&o=0&q=Ashland+Area+Farmers+Market+now+accepts+FoodShare&d1=7-1-2009&d2=09-17-2009&s=relevance&r=Subject%2CAuthor%2CContent&l=20>

Mobile Farmers Market Facebook Page

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/album.php?aid=106872&id=114067033977>

Customers get advice from guest chefs on how to use fresh produce- The Daily Press 9-24-2009

<http://www.ashlandwi.com/articles/2009/09/24/community/doc4abb828a0207f259878817.txt>

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