



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



CLARK COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

Breaking down barriers to consuming fresh fruits and vegetables

BY THE NUMBERS

- 2,483 participants over 4 years.
- 1,746 qualifying shoppers and 659 non-qualifying shoppers.
- 1,852 food bags distributed.
- 66 markets: 33 in Vancouver, 21 in Camas, and 12 in Salmon Creek.

2016

ISSUE

Multiple barriers, such as cost, availability, access, taste, convenience, and spoilage can affect a family’s fruit and vegetable consumption. In 2014, only 26% of adults and 25% of youth in Clark County reported eating five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. 64% of adults are overweight, and 26% of those residents are defined as obese. Additionally, 25% of Clark County youth are overweight and 10% are defined as obese. Low consumption of fruits and vegetables could be a risk factor for obesity and a poor diet.

Shoppers need to purchase the freshest produce, and learn how to prepare it to maximize the product’s taste and nutritional value. Families who know how to properly store produce can reduce their rate of spoilage, and their fruit and vegetable consumption will increase.

The objective of the WSU Clark County Extension Healthy Families project is to reduce these barriers by reaching out to all families, with extra attention to limited-resource families, and motivate and educate them on ways they can increase their daily fruit and vegetable consumption using the fresh, local, seasonal produce available at farmers markets.

RESPONSE

Three farmers markets in Clark County participated: Vancouver, Camas, and Salmon Creek. To increase awareness, two different pamphlets were distributed, one detailing the SNAP, Healthy Families, Senior Nutrition, Fresh Match and WIC programs, and the other listing the location, dates, and times of the various farmers markets in the Clark County area.

The Clark County Extension program staffed booths at 8 to 15 farmers market events each year from 2011 to 2015. Staff developed educational fliers and recipe demonstrations to showcase a featured fruit or vegetable available at the market. The recipes were simple, usually requiring just 7 or 8 ingredients common to most households, and used basic cooking methods. The back of the recipe card featured a “Kids in the Kitchen” section that gave more ideas on how to prepare the item in a way that would motivate kids to eat it. The recipe card also listed other helpful or interesting information, such as different uses for the produce or recipe, interesting facts pertaining to the featured produce, or optional varieties. Most of the featured recipes were prepared at the booth, and small samples were provided as an incentive to bring people in and spark discussion about the featured fruit or vegetable.

For more information, contact Sandra Brown, WSU Clark County Extension, Food Safety and Nutrition | Heritage Farm, 1919 NE 78th St., Vancouver, WA 98665 | 360-397-6060 or browns@wsu.edu.



QUOTES

"I have found some fun ways to add vegetables to meals that my family will like. I come to the market each week now to buy fresh produce and learn more about how to use them."

"I have learned that I can purchase small amounts of many different kinds of vegetables and make fun things with the variety. I used to buy only one or two kinds of vegetables and that was boring. Now it is fun to have a big mixture and it isn't that expensive."

"We saw an increase in produce sales the weekends your booth was at the market."

FUNDING

2011 - \$25,000 WIC Farmers Market Grant

2012 - \$4,800 grant from Clark County Public Health

2013 - \$4,800 grant from Clark County Public Health

2014 - \$6,000 from individual farmers markets

2015 - \$53,000 USDA - Fini grant

2016 - \$53,000 USDA - Fini grant

Handouts were designed to educate visitors on how to select, store, and prepare the featured produce item. The goal was to help shoppers purchase the freshest, best-tasting produce; teach them how to prepare it to maximize the produce's taste and nutritional benefits; and to reduce the rate of spoilage by teaching them how to store the produce properly. Handouts also outlined nutritional benefits.

IMPACTS

Booth visitors were encouraged by a Clark County Extension employee to fill out a short survey of six multiple-choice questions.

Of the survey respondents, 90% reported that the information they learned was helpful and 95% said that they planned to use the given recipe. In additional written comments, most people noted they walked away with knowledge of a new recipe or a fun fact about the nutritional benefits of an item. Many people said they enjoyed the recipes that taught them to use the featured produce in new and unusual ways, such as the cucumber radish salsa and the beet hummus. They felt encouraged to purchase produce at the market more often and prepare it in the new way. Most participants said they looked forward to learning about a new vegetable the next time.

Those who noted that they participated in any of the listed programs (SNAP/EBT, free or reduced-priced school meals, Head Start/ECEAP, TANF, WIC, Food Pantry) qualified to receive a free bag of produce. The Healthy Families booth was held on days WIC was at the market. There were twice as many qualifying shoppers as non-qualifying shoppers who participated in the booth than in the years the booth was there on non-WIC distribution days.

Farmers Markets representatives report there is an increase in participation from limited-resource families during the weeks that both WIC and our Healthy Families booths are at the markets. The vendors say they had higher sales on those weeks as well.

As a result of the success of this program, we applied for USDA funding and received \$106,000 over two years to continue providing Fresh Match dollars to EBT customers and continue the Healthy Families booth. Healthy Families also is going to expand its market education in 2016 to include market tours. These tours will show participants how to select, purchase, and store fresh produce.