

Family Farmers Market Report September 2015

Background

Food \$ense and Mukilteo School District partnered to host a Family Farmers Market Night at Challenger Elementary on September 17, 2015. The goal was to increase access to healthy foods among students and families who qualify for SNAP (food stamp) benefits, by introducing them to our local farmers markets as another place to shop for healthy foods using their SNAP/EBT card.

Recruitment and Marketing

In order to entice families to join us, we provided a few incentives and highlighted these in our marketing materials. We offered \$3 in tokens to buy fresh produce to the first 100 kids who arrived, free samples of a seasonal recipe, fun family activities such as face painting and games with 4-H and YMCA, as well as small take-aways such as “moostache” stickers from the Washington State Dairy Council. Marketing materials were distributed in the following ways:



- POSTERS: At Horizon, Discovery, Odyssey, Fairmount and Challenger Elementary schools, as well as at Snohomish County YMCA locations in Mukilteo and South Everett.
- WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA: Posted to the Challenger school website, Snohomish County Food \$ense Website and Facebook page.
- NEWSLETTERS: July/August e-Newsletter to families, in school newsletters at the 5 elementary schools.
- FLYERS: 4,500 Flyers were distributed to all students at the 5 elementary schools.
- SCHOOL: Challenger Elementary reader board, robo-call to families, and Principal PA announcements the week before the event.
- PRESS RELEASE: A Press Release was sent to all partners including Challenger Elementary, Mukilteo School District, Everett Farmers Market, YMCA, 4-H and each of the 3 farmers.

Participants and Demographics

Our target audience for this event was families who qualify for SNAP benefits. A good indicator of this is the number of students who qualify for Free or Reduced Price (FRP) school meals. At Challenger Elementary approximately 73% of students qualify for FRP meals. The 5 Title One schools that encompass our target audience have FRP rates ranging from 50- 85%.

A total of **213 people** visited the Family Farmers Market Night, with the following demographics:

Adults	Youth	White	Black	Nativ Amer	Hispanic	Asian	Other	Female	Male
81	132	66	18	1	72	26	30	144	69



Not included in the numbers above are the vendors, organizations and supporters who attended the event, a total of 41 people, including:

- Farmers: Farmer Frog, Skiple Farm, Seattle Youth Garden Works
- Tabling Organizations: YMCA of Snohomish County, 4-H, Mari's Place (face painting), Child Strive, Challenger PTA and Food Sense
- Challenger school administrators
- Mukilteo School District administrators and School Board members
- Chair of the Casino Road Collective Impact Committee

Cost

Total cost of \$542 for printing posters and materials, tokens and recipe tasting, not including staff time.

Impacts

Our goals were:

1. Families will learn how to use their EBT cards at Farmers Markets
 - a. **1 family used an EBT card** to purchase fruits & vegetables at the market (Measured by Everett Farmers Market EBT Point of Sale system)
 - b. **75 families took home information about how to use EBT at farmers markets**, and which local farmers markets accept EBT
2. Increase people's access to fresh fruits & vegetables
 - a. **60 families took home recipes** for seasonal fruits & vegetables
 - b. **MANY families left with bags of fresh produce**

In addition we found:

- The market night generated a total of **\$643.00 in income for local farms** from cash, EBT, and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks.
- Long lines were observed to purchase apples, and for face painting. These are definitely things to include in future events!



Overall, we did not have the intended impact of generating a large number of EBT transactions at the market. Most families used either the free tokens for kids, cash, or both to purchase fresh fruits & vegetables. A few reasons for this may be:

- Families may have used the free tokens and did not need to use their SNAP benefits.
- This event happened on the 17th of the month, and by the middle of the month families have sometimes used most or all of their SNAP benefits.
- Families may have felt embarrassed or uncomfortable revealing that they have SNAP benefits to the people administering the exit survey.

However, 75 families took home information about how to use SNAP/EBT at local farmers markets, and which local markets accept EBT. **And 29 out of 30 families polled at the exit said that they will shop at a farmers market again because of this experience.** This leads us to believe that even though most families did not use their EBT cards at this event, they gained the information necessary to use their EBT cards at farmers markets, and had a good experience that makes them want to shop at our local farmers markets in the future.

Next Steps

We will continue to provide families in Mukilteo School District with information about local farmers markets and how to use their SNAP/EBT benefits through signage at schools, newsletters, and flyers sent home with kids who receive weekend backpacks from the Packs for Kids program. We will also explore opportunities to provide similar events with interested schools as funding permits.

Special Thanks to:

Rosa Torres, Community Liaison at Challenger Elementary, and school support staff for coordinating marketing at school, parking and market location set up, and translation of EBT information into Spanish and Russian. This event would not have happened without your support!

Julie Evenson, Food \$ense Program Coordinator in Kitsap and Clallam Counties, for paving the way and sharing her model for a mobile farmers market with us!

Karen Erickson and Gary Purves from Everett Farmers Markets, for supporting our families with EBT technology at markets and working to make fresh local food available to everyone!



This material and event was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low incomes. To find out more, contact WSU Extension Snohomish County at 600 128th Street, SE, Everett WA, or **Acacia Zambrana at 206-459-9378**. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.