

Black Hills Farmers Market Provides Access to Fruits and Vegetables for Lower Income South Dakotans

Summary

The Black Hills Farmers Market (BHFMM) Double Up Food Bucks program is increasing access to fresh produce for families, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients, and building a foundation for lifelong healthy eating habits.

Key Components

The mission of BHFMM is to develop connections between producers and consumers for the benefit of the local community. One group of consumers that is not always reached are SNAP recipients. SNAP, the nation's largest program in the hunger safety net, offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families so they can better afford nutritious foods. In April 2021, there were over 10,000 SNAP recipients in Pennington County with half being children under 18. An average payment of \$334 is disbursed to SNAP recipients each month, which totals \$1.5 million in benefits.

The BHFMM increased access and reduced barriers to fresh fruits and vegetables, specifically for SNAP recipients, in two ways. First, Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) was accepted, and online ordering was available at all Rapid City markets. Second, they offered Double Up Food Bucks, which doubles the value of SNAP benefits spent at the market. By doing so, the BHFMM not only increased access to fruits and vegetables, but also supported local farmers since recipients were encouraged to buy fruits and vegetables directly from local producers. The program provides a one-to-one match in free Double Up Food Bucks (up to \$20) for customers shopping with their SNAP benefits. For example, a customer who spends \$20 in benefits will receive \$40 in tokens to spend at the farmers market. Tokens can be saved for future use. Double Up Food Bucks are available from May through October, when local produce is most available. This is a "win-win-win" program by having healthier foods for families, increasing business for producers, and boosting the local economies.

Challenges and Solutions

The first step in this process was accepting EBT at BHFMM, which was accomplished in 2011. Following that, BHFMM researched Fair Food Network's Double Up Food Bucks program and sought community funding for the project. In 2019, The Black Hills Area Community Foundation and Monument Health teamed up to financially support the program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was a difficult year for many and BHFMM surpassed all their previous records for SNAP redemption by bringing in \$10,000 of SNAP sales. As more people hear about the program, more people are excited to participate.

Results

The Double Up Food Bucks program improves the affordability of purchasing fresh produce at the farmers market. Customers have expressed appreciation for the increased access to fresh, healthy food. Implementing the token system has created the opportunity to offer additional incentive programs more easily.

For example, \$2 tokens are given to children who visit the market during the month of July, which is currently funded by Live Well Black Hills. The kids' token program along with family friendly events offered in July, draw in many families to the farmers market, including some first timers. Children can shop for their favorite vegetable or fruit and many families return to the farmers market throughout the summer for more local food.

Evidence-Based Interventions

Farmers Markets Increase Access to Fruits and Vegetables:
Suggested Strategy ([Some Evidence](#))

Next Steps

In partnership with Live Well Black Hills and Community Health Center of the Black Hills, the BHFM's launched a new project to serve low-income individuals called the "Produce Prescription" program. In Summer 2021, healthcare providers will be able to issue produce prescriptions for patients to redeem at Black Hills Farmers Market. They will also offer a bus pass to patients, if needed, on Rapid City's transit system, which has a stop across the street from the market. BHFM is working hard to anticipate and eliminate barriers that may impede potential customers. Healthy, local food should be available to all!

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GET MORE FRUITS & VEGGIES



“ I heard about this in another state, and I prayed for it to come to South Dakota.”

– Anonymous



A woman shared her pride in losing weight and regaining her health through changing her diet.

Another woman expressed how much her children love vegetables and shared her excitement that she could purchase more for them.



SOUTH DAKOTA