

Farmers Market Incentive Programs Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Among Food Stamp Recipients, Boost Local Economies: Results of Survey

Wholesome Wave Outlines Survey Findings and Plans Expansion

Bridgeport, CT – Wholesome Wave, a Connecticut-based, non profit organization dedicated to increasing access to and affordability of fresh, locally grown food, released Tuesday, October 11th, 2011, encouraging findings from its national surveys of farmers markets and farmers that participated in its Double Value Coupon Programs in 2010.

The surveys, taken from a sample of Wholesome Wave's more than 120 participating farmers markets and 1,700 farmers, found that DVCP significantly increased the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among food stamp recipients while providing an economic boost to local farmers, farmers market operators and surrounding businesses.

The Wholesome Wave surveys, which spanned more than 20 states across the country, found that nearly 90 percent of DVCP customers reported increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and said the local produce made a big difference in their diet. DVCP augments the value of federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or food stamp benefits at local farmers markets.

Other important survey findings include:

- SNAP redemption generally doubles at markets after double value coupon implementation and some markets experience much larger increases
- Nearly 60 percent of farmers that were eligible to redeem federal nutrition benefits reported that they experienced increased sales as a result of incentive implementation at their market.
- In response to increased sales, many farmers reported making changes to their operations by increasing acreage/production, diversifying products and adding additional hoop houses or greenhouses.
- 40 percent of DVCP consumers said they planned to spend an average of \$21 at nearby businesses on market day, resulting in additional economic benefits to the local economies.

Wholesome Wave also announced plans to introduce or expand its incentive programs in as many as 30 farmers markets across the country with support from Oakland, Calif.-based Kaiser Permanente. With funding from a \$1.2 million grant from the nonprofit health care organization, Wholesome Wave is expanding its DVCP program in Georgia, Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, Ohio, Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, Colorado and Northern and Southern California.

Both Michel Nischan, president and founder of Wholesome Wave, and Loel Solomon, Ph.D., vice president for community health at Kaiser Permanente, celebrated the early successes of the partnership. They called the union a “natural fit,” especially since Kaiser Permanente now hosts 40 markets at facilities and locations in four states. Wholesome Wave programs are now operating in 25 states and the District of Columbia with more than 45 partners who are reaching more than 250 participating farmers markets.

“This partnership between Wholesome Wave and Kaiser Permanente makes sense because our organizations have such closely aligned values and aspirations,” said Solomon. “We both believe that everyone deserves access to healthy, affordable and sustainably grown food and we know how important that is for people’s health and the health of our planet.”

Nischan said, “Wholesome Wave commends Kaiser Permanente for recognizing the importance of increasing healthy food access to underserved communities and for supporting farmers markets and local farmers as a way to achieve that goal.”

Funding for the grant is a result of Kaiser Permanente’s employee wellness program, through which the nonprofit organization contributed \$50 for each employee who took a health risk assessment. More than 22,000 Kaiser Permanente employees participated in the program and the funds raised in 2010 are being distributed to Wholesome Wave and the Washington D.C.-based National Assembly for School-Based Health Care.

The grant also will enable Wholesome Wave to plan for an expansion of its Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx). This program aims to bridge the gap between physicians providing advice in the clinical setting and changing individual behavior by providing “prescriptions” that can be redeemed at the neighborhood farmers market for the purchase of fresh, locally grown, fruits and vegetables.

About Wholesome Wave

The mission of Wholesome Wave is to empower communities to make better food choices. By creating partnership-based programs in historically excluded urban and rural communities, Wholesome Wave increases access to and affordability of fresh, locally grown food to nourish neighborhoods across America. These initiatives, such as the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) and the Fruit & Veggie Prescription Program (FVRx), demonstrate and support the viability of healthy food commerce and its ability to rebuild our nation’s food system. Wholesome Wave leverages private and public funds, as well as existing Federal, State and local government programs, to foster collaborative efforts through a national network of strategically targeted program partners. This network of partners works in concert to transform current realities in the American food system. Visit www.wholesomewave.org to learn more. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

About Kaiser Permanente

Kaiser Permanente is committed to helping shape the future of health care. We are recognized as one of America's leading health care providers and not-for-profit health plans. Founded in 1945, our mission is to provide high-quality, affordable health care services and to improve the health of our members and the communities we serve. We currently serve 8.8 million members in nine states and the District of Columbia. Care for members and patients is focused on their total health and guided by their personal physicians, specialists and team of caregivers. Our expert and caring medical teams are empowered and supported by industry-leading technology advances and tools for health promotion, disease prevention, state-of-the art care delivery and world-class chronic disease management. Kaiser Permanente is dedicated to care innovations, clinical research, health education and the support of community health. For more information, go to: www.kp.org/newscenter.