



# Lucas County

## Pop- up Farmers' Markets Provide Fresh, Local Produce to Inner-City Neighborhoods

### At a Glance

Farmers' markets are an effective way to offer healthy food options in underserved areas. When farmers' markets are equipped with the ability to accept federal nutrition assistance benefits, access to fresh fruits and vegetables for underserved populations rises, increasing produce consumption. Lucas County Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) collaborated with the Toledo Farmers' Market to provide two pop-up farmers' markets in two Toledo neighborhoods, Central City and East Toledo. Accepting WIC Farmers' Market, Senior Nutrition, and SNAP/Double Up vouchers at the markets provided residents the opportunity to redeem their vouchers for fresh, healthy produce.

### Public Health Challenge

In the 2016/2017 Lucas County Health Assessment, 96% of Lucas County adults reported eating less than the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Lucas County also has a poverty rate of 17.9%, which exceeds the state level of 13.9%. Many individuals live in food deserts, defined as areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthy, affordable food. In addition, 17% of Lucas County residents receive SNAP benefits; more than 20,000 seniors receive Senior Nutrition vouchers; and 4,590 WIC participants receive Farmers' Market vouchers. Farmers' markets have been proven to provide a positive impact on the health and diets of their communities. They bring healthy, nutritious foods to residents, especially those who participate in SNAP, WIC, and the Senior Farmers'

Market Nutrition program. To address the issue of low produce consumption in Lucas County, pop-up farmers' markets were implemented in strategic community locations to increase access and convenience for people in target community.

### Approach

In an effort to provide access to fresh, healthy foods, Lucas County CHC collaborated with the Toledo Farmers' Market. Currently, the Toledo Farmers' Market has two locations, operating twice per week. Through discussion with the Farmers' Market manager and the Lucas County WIC director, it was determined that there was a need for pop-up farmers' markets to better assist the community. CHC worked closely with the Farmers' Market manager to determine locations, days, times, and farmers



for the pop-up farmers' market. Each market would accept WIC Farmers' Market, Senior Nutrition, and SNAP/Double Up vouchers. CHC reached out to community organizations to provide services and resources at the markets. In addition, CHC registered the two pop-up farmers' markets with the Department of Agriculture and marketed the event through Facebook, news releases, newspapers, other media and community partners. This approach provided an opportunity to increase access to locally grown produce as well as increase redemption of WIC Farmers' Market, Senior Nutrition and SNAP/Double Up vouchers.

## Results

The two pop-up farmers' markets combined reached more than 9,000 residents in the Toledo area. Redemption rates for both farmers' markets were obtained from the Toledo Farmers' Market manager. The combined redemption rates for both pop-up markets resulted in a total of \$275 of WIC vouchers, or 55 vouchers redeemed; \$275 of senior vouchers, or 55 vouchers, and \$95 in SNAP/Double Up. Post-surveys were completed by patrons at both locations. Patrons indicated that having the markets close by and accessible to where they live was a huge benefit. The quality, selection, and price of the produce available was reasonable and acceptable to patrons. Patrons appreciated having local resources and

services available during the farmers' market. Lastly, patrons also indicated that they would like more pop-up markets throughout the summer. The two pop-up farmers' markets were a success for everyone involved.

## What's Next

The CHC program will continue to collaborate with the Toledo Farmers' Market as well as the local WIC department and senior centers to provide additional pop-up farmers' markets in underserved areas of Toledo. The expectation is to provide two more pop-up farmers' markets in 2020 that will be accessible to those who may find it most difficult to access fresh, healthy food. With increased access to these foods, the rate of produce consumption is expected to increase. Reaching more individuals, as well as redeeming more WIC and senior vouchers along with SNAP/Double Up, is the ultimate goal.

## Find Out More

- Support local farmers' markets by shopping and purchasing locally grown produce.
- Visit a local farmers' market to have first-hand experience of what foods are grown in your area.
- Join the CHC coalition, Healthy Youth and Family, to stay current on all the work that is being done to improve access to healthy foods in Lucas County



***"This was a great idea and very helpful. I am busy when I get off work and going to the downtown Farmers' Market is not always easy for me. It was accessible and convenient."***

*— Farmers' Market patron*



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