

SNAP: Proven Strategies

Farmers Market SNAP Associate Program:
Connecting SNAP Customers To Your Farmers Market

Southern Tier West Regional Farmers Market Network
Kimberly LaMendola, Food System Projects Manager
klamendola@SouthernTierWest.org
716-945-5301 x2211

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

Development of Role

- USDA Farmers Market SNAP Support Grant (FMSSG) – 1st group of awardees
- Original title was SNAP Customer Relations and Education Volunteer
- Final title = Farmers Market SNAP Associate (stipend negates volunteer)
- 24 month grant period = 2 market seasons of SNAP Associates cohort (June-Oct)
- Associates deployed to 8 markets year 1; 10 markets year 2
- Stipend and travel covered by FMSSG
- \$1000 per Associate, plus \$100 travel
- *4 hours on market day for 12 weeks*
- *6 hours each month community outreach or in-house training*
- *Averaged about 70 – 80 hours per Associate per season*

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

Need for Role

- Research showed majority markets in USDA Low Income Low Access designation
- Mean poverty rate for 3 county region = 18% (3,800 square miles, mostly rural)
- 18,000 households receive SNAP (16.8% of total households)
- 10,868 SNAP households located in communities served by a farmers market but markets had low or no SNAP purchase history
- Managers/vendors lacked time to develop relationships with SNAP customers
- No coordination among nutrition education providers at market level
- Local SNAP offices and human service agencies had little to zero awareness of farmers markets – locations, accepted benefits, nutrition/education opportunities

Where Are SNAP Households in the Southern Tier?

Overview of SNAP Households in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauque Counties relative to individual Farmers Markets.
Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board

COUNTY/PLACE	LOCALITY SNAP Market	2010			2011			2012			2013			Combined SNAP Households in Locality	% of Total SNAP Households in County	% of Total SNAP Households in Locality	Food Data Access Code March 2013
		Total Households	SNAP Households	% SNAP Households	Total Households	SNAP Households	% SNAP Households	Total Households	SNAP Households	% SNAP Households	Total Households	SNAP Households	% SNAP Households				
Allegany County	NA	38,841	2,077	5.35%	38,828	2,877	7.41%	38,813	2,228	5.74%	38,798	2,782	7.17%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona	NA	1,000	23	2.30%	724	51	7.04%	715	45	6.30%	705	38	5.39%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona Village	NA	800	18	2.25%	477	25	5.24%	414	19	4.59%	402	22	5.47%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona	NA	451	138	30.38%	412	170	41.26%	444	203	45.72%	451	170	37.70%	108	23.95%	28.50%	U LA w/o vehicle
Altoona Village	NA	299	20	6.7%	402	19	4.73%	402	73	18.16%	391	20	5.11%	127	32.5%	18.85%	U LA w/o vehicle
Altoona Town	NA	800	21	2.63%	800	38	4.75%	804	207	25.75%	808	222	27.47%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona	NA	2,122	720	33.93%	2,121	871	40.9%	2,121	800	37.7%	2,121	800	37.7%	308	14.5%	28.20%	U LA w/o vehicle
Cattaraugus County	NA	24,889	2,811	11.3%	24,812	4,214	17.0%	24,811	4,241	17.1%	24,804	4,868	19.6%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus Town	NA	1,213	222	18.3%	1,203	217	18.1%	1,214	221	18.2%	1,211	228	18.8%	419	34.6%	21.15%	U
Cattaraugus Village	NA	1,111	328	29.5%	718	198	27.6%	728	208	28.6%	711	262	36.8%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Coal City	NA	6,171	11,711	19.1%	6,171	11,711	19.1%	6,171	11,711	19.1%	6,171	11,711	19.1%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Coal Town	NA	898	24	2.67%	898	41	4.57%	898	91	10.13%	898	118	13.13%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona Village	NA	288	28	9.72%	288	28	9.72%	288	28	9.72%	288	28	9.72%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus City	NA	2,242	578	25.8%	2,242	578	25.8%	2,242	578	25.8%	2,242	578	25.8%	759	33.8%	28.20%	U LA w/o vehicle; U LA 10 mile; U LA 1 mile
Cattaraugus Town	NA	232	32	13.8%	232	32	13.8%	232	32	13.8%	232	32	13.8%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona Community	NA	412	41	9.95%	412	41	9.95%	412	41	9.95%	412	41	9.95%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona Town	NA	718	49	6.8%	718	49	6.8%	718	49	6.8%	718	49	6.8%	127	17.6%	11.70%	U LA w/o vehicle
Altoona Village	NA	341	22	6.45%	341	22	6.45%	341	22	6.45%	341	22	6.45%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus County	NA	8,000	1,200	15.0%	8,000	1,200	15.0%	8,000	1,200	15.0%	8,000	1,200	15.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus Village	NA	4,000	1,200	30.0%	4,000	1,200	30.0%	4,000	1,200	30.0%	4,000	1,200	30.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus City	NA	1,211	200	16.5%	1,211	200	16.5%	1,211	200	16.5%	1,211	200	16.5%	417	34.4%	28.20%	U LA w/o vehicle; U LA 10 mile; U LA 1 mile
Coal City	NA	2,601	1,122	43.1%	2,601	1,122	43.1%	2,601	1,122	43.1%	2,601	1,122	43.1%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Coal Town	NA	211	24	11.4%	211	24	11.4%	211	24	11.4%	211	24	11.4%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus Village	NA	134	150	112.7%	134	150	112.7%	134	150	112.7%	134	150	112.7%	143	107.5%	12.20%	U
Cattaraugus Village	NA	121	111	91.7%	121	111	91.7%	121	111	91.7%	121	111	91.7%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Coal Town	NA	208	50	24.0%	214	71	33.2%	217	74	34.1%	208	74	35.6%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona Town	NA	2,000	204	10.2%	2,114	200	9.46%	2,200	200	9.1%	2,114	200	9.46%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Altoona	NA	22,000	4,700	21.4%	22,000	5,100	23.2%	22,000	5,000	22.7%	22,000	5,200	23.6%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus Min. Allegheny Co.	NA	220	20	9.1%	812	38	4.7%	824	38	4.6%	843	38	4.5%	107	12.7%	12.40%	U
Cattaraugus Min. Chautauque Co.	NA	3	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	NA	NA	NA	NA
Cattaraugus Min. Cattaraugus Co.	NA	2	0	0.0%	902	11	1.2%	910	20	2.2%	908	20	2.2%	NA	NA	NA	NA

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

Emerging Role and Strategy

- Engage SNAP customers and liaison with vendors selling eligible items: best value items, seasonal savings, bulk discounts, farmer-consumer relationship
- Meaningful, supportive, helpful customer service
- Nutrition, education, and food preparation/preservation activities
- Familiar touchstone at market without stigma
 - *Humanize market shopping experience with SNAP and other nutritional benefits*
 - *Acculturate shopper to using farmers market for benefits redemption and to choosing fresh food products rather than processed items*
- No EBT processing or “back of the house” operations functions – SNAP customer-centric relationship
- Community outreach to strengthen connection between farmers markets and service agencies

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

What the Role Became

- Travel to/from market and outreach agencies
- Travel to STW office for training
- Weekly familiar face at market so SNAP customer can build trust in using benefits
- Identify and engage existing & potential new farmers market SNAP clients
- Promote market and accepted benefits through community engagement, presentations, fliers, tabling events
- Conduct respectful SNAP customer engagement and assist with shopping activities
- Discuss ways to extend food shelf life, preservation and preparation tips, extend value with low-cost recipes
- Assist and/or conduct food demos with collaborative partners

- Develop respectful relationship with market manager and staff
- Organize educational and nutritional programming on regular basis
- Understand challenges SNAP households face in accessing fresh, healthy, affordable food
- Can differentiate the various food items at market & accompany shopper through choices/seasonal values
- Conduct observational journaling, surveys, notes
- Enter weekly reports into SurveyMonkey form
- Implement market activities that attract and acculturate SNAP shoppers to become market regulars
- Work with Associate cohort to share resources, strategies, and develop thematic activities
- Identify social media strategies to reach SNAP customers
- Participate in exit interview

Farmers Market SNAP Associate Recruit, Train, and Supervise

- Recruited from colleges, nonprofit orgs., senior centers, local networks, farmers market manager and vendor referrals, social media
- All diversities encouraged, especially SNAP recipients
- Assigned markets closest to Associate's home base or area of preference
- Clearly defined activities and expectations of role
- Challenge: college Associates return to school in mid-August
- Challenge: hesitation of markets to participate
- Challenge: considerable time and effort on Project Coordinator to develop and implement Associate program
- Challenge: how/if sustain Associates after grant funding

HIRING SUMMER ASSOCIATES

HELP CONNECT SNAP CONSUMERS WITH FARMERS MARKETS

SUMMER 2017

LOCAL FOOD PROJECTS

SOUTHERN TIER WEST REGIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD

FRESH LOCAL FROM THE GROUND UP

OPPORTUNITIES IN ALLEGANY, CATTARAUGUS & CHAUTAUGUA COUNTIES

details @ www.FreshLocalWNY.org or call Susan Avery 716-945-5301 x 2206

Link to recruitment package:

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!ArS7binUazQ7goAI2c7YR0LbAVbLdg>

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

Recruit, Train, and Supervise

- Created original training program: https://1drv.ms/f/s!ArS7binUazQ7gopTPq48n2sWu_8nFA
- Intended for Associate and Market Manager to attend training together – 50% success
- Understand connect between SNAP program and role of farmers markets in access/food security
- Basic intro to local food system concepts and area demographics/Southern Tier West's role
- Understanding of SNAP and other nutrition benefits programs
- *Challenges faced by SNAP/low-income households*
- Crash course in seasonal food items/eligible food items
- Crash course in nutrition education / healthy eating guidelines
- Crash course in cooking demo / food safety regs
- Database of resource agencies, partners, collaborators, media outlets, etc.
- High-degree of emphasis on customer service strategies and soft skills/public relations
- Challenge: training Associate and Market Manager simultaneously / develop positive relationship
- Challenge: how to train to “identify” SNAP shopper without fear of profiling

SNAP Customer Relations and Education Associate (CREA) Objectives

- ▶ be a weekly familiar face at the market so that the SNAP client can build trust in using their income benefits at the farmers market,
- ▶ identify and engage existing and potential new farmers market SNAP clients,
- ▶ conduct in effective and respectful customer engagement and be able to assist a SNAP client with all aspects of shopping with SNAP at the weekly farmers market,
- ▶ be able to differentiate the various fresh vegetables and produce, accompany the SNAP shopper through the market to make introductions to the vendors, and to highlight that week's particular purchase power values such as when the market is overrun with zucchini or tomatoes,
- ▶ be able to talk about ways to extend the food's shelf life or how to prepare it in a recipe to extend its value or the best way to freeze large quantities of a high-value item,
- ▶ assist and/or conduct food demonstrations with collaborative partners,
- ▶ organize educational or nutritional programming or assistance on a regular basis,
- ▶ understand some of the challenges SNAP households face in accessing affordable healthy food and to develop strategies for the markets and CREAs to assist the SNAP shopper in extending the greatest value from the benefits at the farmers markets.

What Are Nutrition Assistance Benefits

Ready to shop!



- ▶ Nutrition assistance benefits are funded through the US Department of Agriculture and administered at the state level. They are designed to provide low income households assistance in meeting their nutrition needs in addition to helping the local economy.
- ▶ The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental **Nutrition Assistance** Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides food **benefits**, access to a healthy diet, and education on food preparation and **nutrition** to low-income households.
- ▶ SNAP offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net.



USING SNAP AND
OTHER NUTRITION
BENEFITS AT
FARMERS MARKETS &
FARM STANDS

2016
Allegany, Cattaraugus, &
Chautauqua Counties

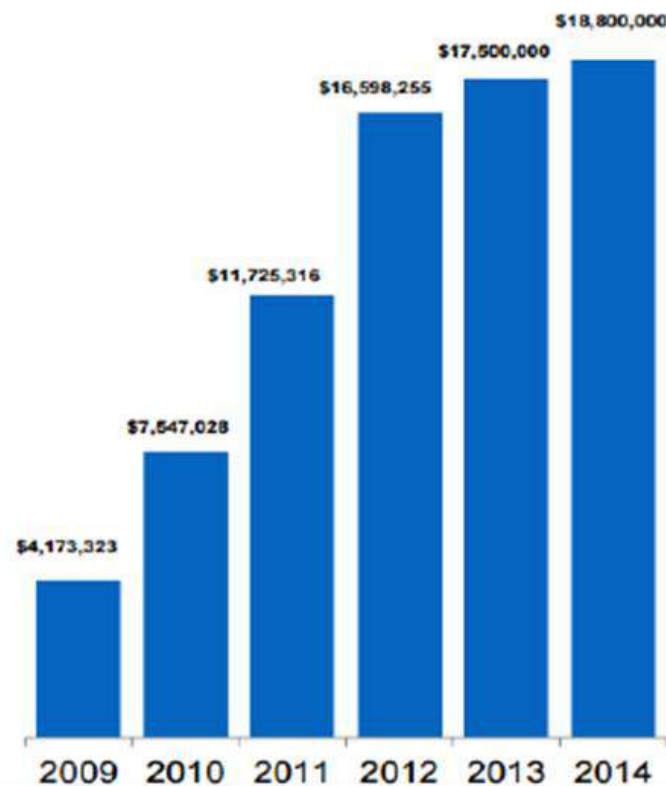


www.FreshLocalWNY.org

What is the Demand for Nutrition Assistance Programs?

Nutrition Assistance Programs

- Acceptance of SNAP benefits at farmers markets and farm stands rose from approximately **900 sites in 2009 to more than 6,400 in 2014**. The value of redemptions grew from **\$4 million to nearly \$19 million**, due to:
 - Pro-active outreach by USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to certify markets and vendors
 - AMS and FNS grants for EBT equipment installation
 - Rise of non-profit voucher programs (i.e., Wholesome Wave, Fair Food Network)
 - Rise of mobile FMs in low-income areas



Farmers Market SNAP Associate

Recruit, Train, and Supervise

- High-degree of self-initiated activities = good fit for most; not for some
- Difficult / delicate balance in supervising a stipend position vs a staff position
- Developed weekly reporting template for Associates to enter activities:
 - *Used Survey Monkey template*
 - *Associates entered # of contacts, how interacted with people, conversations, fliers/postings, notes about market traffic, challenges, anecdotal comments, info for Project Coordinator to follow through on; easy way to capture the thousands of interactions that occurred*
- Associates were paid 3x during seasonal assignment
- Challenge: assuring Associates were performing duties stated; large area for Project Coordinator to cover

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

The Role in Action

Farmers Market SNAP Associates
Outreach and Inform



Farmers Market SNAP Associate The Role in Action

Farmers Market SNAP Associates
Impact Children



Farmers Market SNAP Associate The Role in Action

Farmers Market SNAP Associates
Connect Healthy Eating with Farmers Markets



Farmers Market SNAP Associate Impacts

- Overall, exceeded the 4 main goals of FMSSG project
- *One market realized a 600% increase in SNAP purchases in year 2*
- Markets with same Associate each year generally saw a higher percentage increase in SNAP and other benefits purchases in year 2 than markets with new Associate each season
- Vendors report positive experience with Associate as liaison to SNAP customer = increased verbal interaction results in increased SNAP sales
- SNAP shoppers report value in Associate's assistance with weekly value or power purchases to extend benefits
- Partnerships with nutrition/education providers increased effectiveness of everyone's roles = Associate transcended proprietary issues
- Overall project shored up relationships with SNAP and other benefits offices to local farmers market; Associates provided additional validation for market role in food security
- Associates recorded thousands of interactions, placement of brochures/materials
- Most associates contributed (no stipend) additional weekly hours or extended role to end of market season in role based on personal satisfaction of activities performed

Farmers Market SNAP Associate

Sustainability of the Role

- Uncertain of Associate program moving forward without grant funds
 - *Former Associates have requested similar opportunity for 2018 season*
 - *Need to assess markets' desire or need for similar program*
- Certainly could be a volunteer program or program of a Market “Friends” organization
- This strategy depends on high-degree of supervision, annual training/updates, and already established connections with human service agencies and farmers markets
- Associate role is complementary to work of market and support organization (STW) – does not supplant higher-level of program development work

Contact

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