



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEWS RELEASE

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Michigan Farmers Markets Accept Bridge Cards

EAST LANSING, MICH – One in every four families in Michigan now requires some form of food assistance, and farmers markets all across Michigan are rising to the challenge to meet that need with fresh, local food.

“Everyone should have access to fresh, healthy, local food,” said Amanda Segar, coordinator of the Michigan Farmers Markets Food Assistance Partnership, which is leading the effort to increase Bridge Card access at farmers markets. “That’s why so many farmers markets are now accepting Bridge Cards, to help get fresh food onto the tables of the families who need it most.”

Bridge Cards are Michigan’s electronic benefits transfer (EBT) debit cards which are used to dispense federal food assistance dollars via the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly Food Stamps. Clients can now use their cards at 57 markets across the state where vendors sell qualifying foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables, baked goods and meats. A list of the farmers markets that accept Bridge Cards is available here: <http://www.mifma.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/2010-SNAP-markets.pdf>

These 57 markets represent approximately 25% of the more than 220 farmers markets operating in the state. In 2006, only three farmers markets in Michigan accepted Bridge Cards. By 2009, that number was up to 30, thanks to the hard work of the Michigan Farmers Markets Food Assistance Partnership, which is hosted by the Michigan Farmers Market Association and the Michigan Food Policy Council. The Partnership includes more than 50 partners from all across the state who are dedicated to local food access for all.

The Partnership provides information and resources for farmers markets who wish to accept Bridge Cards, including workshops and webinars on how the process works, assistance in purchasing point of sale devices and a mentoring program where new markets can experience first-hand how other markets operate Bridge Card programs. Information for clients is also available that describes what foods can be purchased with Bridge Cards and the advantages of redeeming their Bridge Card dollars at participating farmers markets.

Buying locally at farmers markets helps keep money circulating here in Michigan, which is good for the economy and local communities. According to the Web site of the Michigan Recovery Act, it’s estimated that for every five dollars spent through SNAP, \$9.20 of local economic activity is generated. (http://www.michigan.gov/recovery/0,1607,7-172-52952_52959-212303--00.html)



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MIFMA was developed in 2006 to promote and grow farmers markets across the state and increase their visibility to both producers and consumers. This membership-based organization helps local consumers access good food and area farmers increase their income and preserve farmland by offering professional development, marketing support and a policy voice.

MIFMA's mission is to advance farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. Our vision is to place farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement, working to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support. To learn more, please visit www.mifma.org or call (517) 432-3381.