



MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION

How Can the Michigan Farmers Markets Food Assistance Partnership Help You?

By: Amanda Segar

Michigan Farmers Market Food Assistance Partnership Coordinator

The Michigan Farmers Markets Food Assistance Partnership is a program of MIFMA that provides networking opportunities, shares resources and facilitates collaboration for individuals and organizations working to increase consumers' access to healthy, locally-produced foods through farmers markets.

The Food Assistance Partnership focuses on those consumers who are eligible for food assistance, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) for both Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) clients and seniors, and similar programs.

Our more than 50 partners include farmers markets, state agencies, non-profit organizations and others involved in the local food system who believe that everyone should have access to fresh, healthy, local food and that farmers markets are a great place to purchase that food and to connect with local farmers and the community.

Beginning in 2007, the Food Assistance Partnership has worked to increase the number of farmers markets that

are equipped to accept SNAP benefits. The SNAP program, formerly Food Stamps, is the largest federal nutrition assistance program. Each month, 1.9 million Michiganders receive SNAP benefits on their Bridge Card, and each year, they bring \$2.7 billion into our state to purchase the food that they need for the good health of themselves and their families.

When the Partnership began, SNAP recipients only had access to three Michigan farmers markets. In 2009, that number grew to 30, and in 2010 with the help of the Food Assistance Partnership, that number expanded to 52 farmers markets, representing 25% of the total number of markets in Michigan.

Despite this significant increase, there are still areas of the state where SNAP recipients do not have access to a farmers market. That's why we need you!

Accepting Bridge Cards at your farmers market can be a win-win-win situation for food assistance recipients, the farmers and vendors who sell at your market and the market itself. Food assistance recipients will have increased access to fresh, healthy and locally-produced foods and the opportunity to interact with the farmers who grow it. The farmers and vendors who sell at your market will benefit from increased sales and a

wider customer base, and in turn, your market will benefit. When your market facilitates a program that helps farmers and vendors be more economically viable, it becomes a valuable vendor recruitment and retention tool.

If your market is interested in learning more about what it takes to accept Bridge Cards, join the Food Assistance Partnership for its second annual webinar entitled "Accepting Bridge Cards at Michigan Farmers Markets in 2011." The webinar will be held on Wednesday, March 23 from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and registration information is available online at www.mifma.org.

For more information about becoming a partner in the work of the Food Assistance Partnership, visit www.mifma.org or contact Amanda Segar at (517) 432-3381 or segarama@msu.edu.

Accepting Bridge Cards at Michigan Farmers Markets

Wednesday, March 23, 2011
9 a.m. to Noon
Online Webinar

Everyone should have access to fresh, local food. Farmers markets are a great place to purchase local food and connect with the community. This training session is designed for market organizers, managers, farmers and vendors to provide step-by-step information for accepting Bridge Cards at your farmers market.

Topics Covered Will Include:

- Completing the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Application to become an Authorized Retailer
- Program Administration and Implementation
- Obtaining a Point of Sale Device
- Record Keeping
- Promotion and Outreach
- Incentive Programs

Registration is required.
Please RSVP by Friday, March 18, 2011 to reserve your space.

A \$15 fee is required for members of the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) and Michigan Farmers Markets Food Assistance Partnership members.
A \$25 fee is required for all other participants.

To register, complete the online registration form at www.mifma.org/events.

For more information, contact Amanda Segar at 517-432-3381 or segarama@msu.edu.



What's Happening?

- **Mar 4-12:** Agriculture and Natural Resources Week (ANR Week) at MSU. <http://anrweek.canr.msu.edu/>
- **Mar 7:** Double Up Food Bucks Meeting
- **Mar 7:** Marketing Committee Meeting
- **Mar 8:** Market Manager Certificate Program: Marketing and Outreach
- **Mar 8:** Market Manager "Boot Camp" IV
- **Mar 9:** Market Manager Certificate Program: Manager to Manager Education and Presentations
- **Mar 16:** MIFMA Board Meeting
- **Mar 29:** Organizational Development Committee Meeting
- **Apr 17 - 24:** MIFMA Membership Week
- **Aug 4:** Farmers Market at the Capitol
- **Sept 15:** Farmers Market at the Capitol

For more information regarding these listings, call 517-432-3381 or visit the Calendar of Events page at www.mifma.org.



The Michigan Farmers Market Association advances 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 and to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support.

Welcome New Members

MIFMA would like to welcome its new members for the past month.

Farmer/ Vendor

- Jam by Hand, Canton
- Dancing Butterfly Green Creations LLC, Ann Arbor
- Hand Sown Farm, Manchester

Farmers Market

- Hartland Farmers Market, Hartland
- Springfield Township Parks and Recreation, Davisburg
- Shore of Plenty, New Buffalo

To join MIFMA, visit www.mifma.org!

Donations

MIFMA would like to thank to its generous donors.

- Gordie Moeller
- Michael and Julie Studier, Tower Hill Farm

Find MIFMA on Facebook and Twitter!



MIFMA Member of the Month:

Lucy Pier

An Interview with Lucy Pier, Menominee Historic Downtown Farmers Market

You're currently the Menominee's Historic Downtown Farmers Market manager. Tell us a little bit about your experience managing the market. What makes the this market special?

I was put in charge of running the market in 2006 on a volunteer basis. Still as a volunteer market manager, it has been a learning and growing experience for both me and the market. It has given me the opportunities to help farmers and crafters grow as business owners and help others in need in our community with making fresh fruit and vegetables available to them through programs like SNAP, Senior Project FRESH, Project FRESH and WISE Woman, that we run at the farmers market.

Even though our market is small compared to others, we have a wide variety of items to offer that other markets don't. We have fruit and vegetables plus farm eggs, all cuts of beef and lamb, all cuts of pork, including bacon, breakfast sausage, and summer sausage, fresh whitefish and smelt. With the passing of the Cottage Food Law, we now offer fresh breads, cookies, caramels, jams, jellies and maple syrup. Our crafts are just as unique as we offer handmade wheat-weaved items, Ukraine Eggs, quilted items, hand-dyed/spun wool yarn/products, handmade wool felt slippers, and hand-crafted jewelry, along with homemade soaps, lotions and laundry soap. We hope this coming year to have honey, whole chicken and prepared food vendors to really round it out.

Our market is also one of the few in the U. P. that is year-round. Our Winter Market is held inside Timeless Treasures Antique Mall, which gives our market a feeling of shopping in the old days when things weren't rushed as they are now. We are in the process in making our market a self-sustaining organization, of which we are very proud.

You are a participating in the Market Manager Certificate Program. What have been some benefits of attending these sessions. Why do you think it was important to become certified?

The benefits have been learning and networking with all the other classmates (market managers) and finding out all the little tricks in running a smooth market and how to solve the problems that may occur. It's an opportunity to find out the legal aspects of running the market as a business and what steps are taken to make it a self-sustaining organization.

The importance of becoming certified means that each and every one of us that is taking this class is very serious in our jobs of market manager, and we are dedicated to the farmers for having a venue for them to sell their wares and dedicated to the community to make sure that they get the best.



You serve on the MIFMA Board of Directors as Region 1 representative. What have you learned about Michigan farmers markets in this leadership position?

MIFMA offers an immense variety of tools for its members and is a resource for organizations such as ours; it's a connection point. It sponsors great events and educational classes that allow us to connect with farmers and market managers across Michigan. I volunteer my time with MIFMA on their Marketing Committee, too, because I know that the more we can work to strengthen each other and connect, the more impact we can have in our communities.

What is one thing that every MIFMA member should know about Menominee's Historic Downtown Farmers Market?

We have the best group of people in the area to work with, and they are willing to pull together to make things work for their market. I am very proud to be their market master, and with their hard work,, we will be a self-sustaining organizaion this year and in the future.

The Menominee's Historic Downtown Farmers Market is a member of MIFMA. Why do you feel it is important for your market to be involved in MIFMA?

With the fast-growing movement of the farmers market, it is good to know that MIFMA has always been there for us when we needed them, whether it's passing on information on new Michigan laws, regulations or the Cottage Food Laws, keeping us abreast of new development of government programs and grants or offering training for SNAP programs and Market Manager Certification Programs. It is endless on where they can help both the large or small farmers market with this information.

It is important to have someone in your corner, and it is just as important to be in their corner as well. Together, we can help shape the future of Michigan farmers markets so that they are here now and in the future. It would be great to see all farmers, large and small, be able to be self-sustainable in this economic time with their favorite farm/market now!



Farmers Markets



with Dru

Grant Writing for Farmers Markets

Q: It's the time of year when a number of grant requests for proposals are released. Do you have any tips for writing strong and competitive grant proposals?

A: This month, we'll be busy preparing our MIFMA proposals for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG). These are just two of the many funding sources that are available to farmers markets and work focused on local and regional food systems. When writing a strong and competitive grant proposal, the first question you need to ask yourself is, "Is this grant right for our project?"

You need to read the Request for Proposals (RFP) closely to determine if a grant is right for your project. Funding sources often have specific eligibility criteria, funding priorities and approved activities. If you do not meet the eligibility requirements or if you request funding for activities that are not allowed under a specific funding stream, your proposal will be dismissed. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to make the decision that your project isn't a good fit. This doesn't mean that it is a bad idea or a poorly conceived project – it simply means you need to look to a different funding source.

On the other hand, if you decide your project is a good fit, you should begin working immediately. Read the entire RFP, and pay close attention to deadlines. The more time

you give yourself to craft the proposal, the more likely you are to be able to compile a compelling and consistent narrative that clearly explains your project. Also, the more time you give yourself to craft the proposal, the more time you have to consider five grant writing tips:

1. **Pay attention to detail.** Sometimes as a grant writer, it can be frustrating that all grants require different margins, font sizes, file type or line spacing. These details often seem minute, but they can be the deciding factor if a proposal is in or out. If you do not read the RFP carefully and miss one of these requirements, it may mean that your proposal never gets read simply because you didn't follow directions. Don't make that mistake. Follow directions, check your spelling, pay attention to word choice and attach all required supplemental materials. This will help ensure that your proposal makes it to the review pile.

2. **Your budget should complement your narrative.** It needs to be very clear that your budget supports the project you outlined in your narrative. Your budget needs to be appropriate for the scale of your project and should reflect the resource requirements you identified throughout the proposal. Remember, your budget should not include a line item for a non-funded activity.

3. **Ask for letters of support in advance.** Many grants require letters of support as a supplement to your proposal. If this is the case, you need to request letters from individuals or groups who know you and can genuinely speak to your capabilities and professionalism. You also need to give them enough time, usually a minimum of a week, to write a good letter. When you request a letter of support, make sure to identify who the letter should be addressed to, the title of your project and the funder so both can be referenced, and some of objectives or activities that you think the writer could specifically address.

4. **Read your proposal with the eyes of a reviewer.** Once you've drafted your proposal, sit down and reread the proposal with the eyes of a reviewer. Pay attention to the evaluation criteria, and think about if you really addressed them. Did you provide all the required information? Did you answer all questions clearly and succinctly? Did you leave out jargon and acronyms? Did you highlight the parts that you want read?

5. **Ask someone else to read your proposal with the eyes of a reviewer.** It is always a good idea to have someone else read and edit your proposal before submitting. To do a good job, this person also needs a copy of the RFP and evaluation criteria.

Classified Ads

Contact Maggie Smith at smith833@msu.edu to place an ad.

D'Vine Wines at the Flint Farmers' Market Job Opening

Job opening at d'Vine Wines at the Flint Farmers' Market is a part time position requiring knowledge of wine, sales experience, and a great attitude. Send resume to mariacarlin1711@gmail.com.

Fulton Street Farmers Market Assistant Market Manager Job Opening

The Assistant Manager will be responsible for assisting the Market Manager in the management, coordination and supervision of daily Market business and operational activities. The position requires approximately 20 hours/week from May to November. Tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Working with multiple committees and board of directors
- Ensuring adherence to market rules by vendors and customers

- Answering new vendor inquiries and customer questions
- Assisting customers using Credit/Debit and Bridge Cards/Double Up Food Bucks
- Assisting in the public phase of Capital Campaign
- Light Custodial and Ground Maintenance Duties
- Intern and Volunteer supervision
- Event Management/Coordination
- Updating the "In Season" segment on therapidian.org

Attention to detail, excellent customer service skills and the ability to interact with diverse groups of people required. Software skills desired include Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Publisher), database and spreadsheets and Internet. Proficient oral and written communication skills required. Knowledge of market management, agricultural practices and/or local food systems is a plus. This position requires irregular schedules, including evenings, weekends and holidays. Four year degree preferred. Submit cover letter and resume to Melissa at: 1147 East Fulton, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 or fultonstmarket@sbcglobal.net. Deadline is 5:00 p.m., Friday, March 11, 2011. Midtown Neighborhood Association is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Potato and Kale Soup



Ingredients:

4 tablespoons olive oil
10 cloves garlic, chopped
6 medium potatoes, peeled and diced into ¾ inch cubes
3 cups coarsely chopped kale
2 medium onions, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
black pepper

Preparation:

Heat oil in large soup or stock pot; add onions, garlic, and salt; saute until onions are translucent. Add potatoes and enough water to cover by 4 inches. Bring to boil and cook, covered until potatoes are about half done. Add kale and cook, uncovered, until potatoes are tender, 10-15 minutes. Puree soup in blender or food processor. Or just mash if you like your soup with chunks. Season with pepper to taste. Makes 6-8 servings

Recipe submitted by Lucy Pier

Food Safety at Farmers Markets

Food safety is a hot topic right now, for growers large and small, and for all markets along the food chain. This new section of the MIFMA E-Newsletter is designed to update you on new and relevant information on food safety as it pertains to farmers markets and the farmers and vendors who sell their goods at markets.

The Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) recently was awarded funding to host on-farm farmer to farmer training sessions and develop resources on food safety this summer tailored specifically to farmers selling to direct markets.

“With outbreaks and recalls dominating the news, food safety is a top priority issue today for all growers, large and small, selling to any kind of market,” said Dru Montri, MIFMA Director.

Many buyers, especially wholesale, retail and institutional, are requiring food safety plans and certifications. However, many of these certifications are not designed with smaller producers in mind who grow and sell many different products directly to consumers at farm stands or farmers markets.

In fact, direct market farmers in Michigan are producing a variety of crops, 16 different crops on average, including those identified to present some of the greatest food safety risks – tomatoes, leafy greens, scallions and

melons – according to a direct market food safety needs assessment in 2010 conducted by MIFMA and Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS) in an effort to understand the needs of direct market farmers as they relate to food safety.

This project, which is funded by a Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) grant, was designed to meet the food safety needs of these direct market growers, according to the 2010 assessment. In addition to the on-farm, farmer to farmer training sessions, this project will develop complementary food safety educational materials for farmers and MDA agents that include information about proper licensing and practices for direct market food service establishments and provide food safety leadership capacity building for agents enforcing the Michigan Food Law and other industry leaders.

“The overall goal of the project is to improve food safety practices of Michigan’s

direct market farmers,” said Montri. “We learned from our 2010 food safety needs assessment that farmers seek food safety information on specific topics, and we’re trying to get that information to them the way that works best for them – through farmer to farmer sessions.”

Topics during the training session will include production practices, like irrigation and scale-appropriate preventative measures, post-harvest handling and packaging of fruits and vegetables, facility sanitation and transportation.

Dates and locations for these sessions will be set in April and will be available online at www.mifma.org.

For more information about this project, contact Dru Montri at (517) 432-0712 or dnmontri@msu.edu.

Learn more about MIFMA online at www.mifma.org.