

For Immediate Release—April 26, 2016

Contact: Emilie Engelhard | 773.573.8391 | eengelhard@fairfoodnetwork.org



Double Up Food Bucks Expands in Flint

Program improves access to fruits and vegetables to help mitigate health impacts of water crisis

ANN ARBOR, Mich.—Fair Food Network announced today it is expanding its Double Up Food Bucks healthy food incentive program in Flint in order to reach more children and families with the nutritious foods needed to limit the effects of lead exposure stemming from the city’s water crisis. The announcement was made during a USDA event at the Flint Farmers’ Market.

“Double Up has been in Flint since 2011, and the community’s use of the program is one of the strongest in the state,” said Oran Hesterman, president and CEO of Fair Food Network. “We are expanding and enhancing our work in the city to ensure more children and families get more healthy food precisely when they need it most.”

Fruits and vegetables and foods rich in calcium have been recommended by experts in the wake of the water crisis. But affordability and access to those foods are often challenges in a city where more than 40 percent of residents live below the poverty line after decades of disinvestment and disenfranchisement.

Double Up addresses this by doubling SNAP recipients’ purchasing power for fruits and vegetables while supporting local growers. For instance, a family that spends \$10 in SNAP benefits on fruits and vegetables at a participating farmers market or grocery store receives an additional \$10 in Double Up Food Bucks to purchase more fruits and vegetables. (SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps.)

“A nutritious diet is critical not just for mitigating the effects of lead exposure, but also for supporting better health for years to come,” said Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a Hurley Children’s Hospital/Michigan State University pediatrician who sounded the alarm about elevated blood lead levels among Flint’s children. “Double Up is an important part of the long-term approach needed to support good nutrition among Flint’s children.”

In 2016, Double Up will expand in Flint to more locations and run year-round as it currently does at the Flint Farmers’ Market. Program enhancements include:

- At all sites in Flint—grocery and the farmers market—any fruit, vegetable, or milk purchase will earn matching Double Up Food Bucks that can be spent on any additional fresh produce. (Any fresh, dried, canned, or frozen produce with no added sugar, salt, or oil will earn Double Up incentives.)
- New transaction technology will allow Double Up users to carry their benefits between the farmers markets and participating grocery stores in Flint. This builds on the system already in place at the Flint Farmers’ Market and will be the first time benefits will be electronically transferrable between different types of retail locations in any SNAP incentive program in the country.

An outreach campaign will ensure Flint residents know about Double Up and how to take full advantage of it.

Fair Food Network is committing up to \$750,000 for Double Up incentives in Flint from June 2016 through December 2017. Combined with the SNAP expenditures that earn those Double Up incentives, a potential \$1.5 million will help Flint residents bring home more healthy food.

“Having access to fresh fruits and vegetables is key to helping limit the effects of lead exposure in children,” said Nick Lyon, director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. “We’re proud to partner with Double Up Food Bucks to help Flint families get the nutritious foods they need for healthy, balanced meals.”

Double Up launched at the Flint Farmers’ Market in 2011 with support from national and local foundations, including Charles Stewart Mott and Ruth Mott foundations, and expanded to two locally owned Landmark grocery stores in 2015. More than 3,000 shoppers spent more than \$100,000 in Double Up Food Bucks at the Flint Farmers’ Market in 2015—more Double Up dollars redeemed than at any other market in the state last season.

Funding for the expansion of Double Up in Flint is being provided by federal, state, and private sources, including USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive program, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Philanthropic support comes from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, The Kresge Foundation, Ruth Mott Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the You Have Our Trust Fund of the NH Charitable Foundation.

“Fruits and vegetables are always important for good health,” said Jamie Clover Adams, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development director. “Michigan’s farming community is here to help Flint during the current crisis and in the years ahead.”

###

FAIR FOOD NETWORK is founded on the belief that vibrant local food systems can create health and economic opportunity for all. A national nonprofit, we work with a diverse network of partners and pioneer solutions that support farmers, strengthen local economies, and increase access to healthy food—especially in our most underserved communities. Dig deeper at fairfoodnetwork.org and join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/fairfoodnetwork) and Twitter [@FairFoodNetwork](https://twitter.com/FairFoodNetwork) & [@OHesterman](https://twitter.com/OHesterman). Join the conversation at #DoubleUp #Flint