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Iowa Healthiest State Initiative Receives USDA Funding to Expand & Innovate SNAP Produce Incentives

Double Up Food Bucks program will benefit nearly 5,000 Iowa families and more than 300 Iowa farmers in 2017

Des Moines, Iowa: The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded \$99,587 to the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative, to expand Double Up Food Bucks, the state’s produce incentive program, which provides fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income Iowa families while supporting local farmers. The grant is matched with private funds bringing total project support to \$250,000.

Iowa Healthiest State Initiative, a non-profit organization, was founded in 2011 by local business leaders in recognition that public health is equally a work force and economic viability issue. Public-private partnerships have been instrumental to the organizations ability to make changes. “We recognize that if we’re going to make changes; it can’t just be done by government agencies and it can’t just be done by the private sector,” said Jami Haberl, Executive Director of the Healthiest State Initiative. “We must work together to support the long-term viability of our state, of our community, and even of our workforce.”

Double Up was launched in 2009 in Michigan by the national nonprofit Fair Food Network. It has since become a national model for healthy food incentives and is active in more than 20 states. This is the third round of federal funding for healthy food incentives programs provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grants program established in the 2014 Farm Bill.

While Iowa is a national agricultural leader, the state ranks last when it comes to fruit and vegetable consumption. Double Up Food Bucks helps low-income families bring home more nutritious produce, by matching SNAP benefits spent at participating sites up to \$10 a day. Those additional dollars can be spent on locally grown fruits and vegetables. For example, if a family spends \$10 in SNAP benefits at a participating farmers market, they will receive an additional \$10 to buy more Iowa grown fruits and vegetables. (SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program formerly known as food assistance.)

“Double Up Food Bucks connects low-income families with healthy food grown by Iowa farmers,” said Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds. “Increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables is key to growing healthier communities and stimulating a stronger economy. Double Up is a win for Iowa.”

Expanded funding will double the number of participating sites and pilot a tablet-based app at select markets allowing vendors to electronically process Double Up incentives. This technology will simplify the experience for customers and participating vendors while streamlining program administration.

In 2017, the Double Up program aims to serve nearly 5,000 Iowa families resulting in \$100,000 worth of fresh produce sales at Iowa farmers markets, directly benefitting more than 300 farmers in the state.

Also new this year, shoppers at five market locations will benefit from nutrition education and planning tools provided by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Educators will be onsite to teach customers about produce selection, storage, cleaning, and preparation. Providing this type of education helps set families up for success when they leave the market by providing tools to help them plan meals and snacks in a way that works for their family, their budget, and their schedule.

“Double Up Food Bucks’ success is rooted in partnerships,” said Jami Haberl, Executive Director of the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative referencing the diverse public and private partnerships fueling Double Up in Iowa including state agencies, local markets, nonprofits, community leaders and businesses including AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa and UnitedHealthcare which are providing statewide funding. “Our partners are strengthening the program and ensuring its continued positive health and economic impact for all Iowans.”

“We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Iowa Healthiest State Initiative to expand Double Up Food Bucks to support more Iowa families and farmers,” said Kim Foltz, CEO, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Iowa. “Access to fresh fruits and vegetables helps people live healthier lives, and fosters better health and well-being among our families and communities.”

A complete list of partners, funders, and Double Up locations can be found at www.iowahealthieststate.com/double-up-food-bucks.

Statewide Financial Support

UnitedHealthcare: “We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Iowa’s Healthiest State Initiative to expand Double Up Food Bucks for Iowa families and farmers. Access to fresh fruits and vegetables helps people live healthier lives, and fosters better health and well-being among our families and communities.” –Kim Foltz, CEO, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan of Iowa

AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa: “A nutritious diet and regular physical activity are the building blocks of a healthy lifestyle. We are proud to partner with Iowa Healthiest State Initiative’s Double Up Food Bucks program on this important effort to help remove a frequent barrier to good health—all while supporting local farmers and the economy.” –Cheryl Harding, President, AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa Market

Support from Iowa Leaders & State Organizations

Rep. Chuck Isenhardt – (IA-1-D): “I was pleased and grateful to work with Ambassador Ken Quinn and Senator Bill Dotzler to facilitate a pilot project grant for Double Up Food Bucks from the World Food Prize Foundation. Iowa is part of the world. We can model production of healthy food grown locally, in sustainable manners, making such food accessible to low-income Iowans at highest risk of diet-related illness. This federal nutrition incentives grant allows Iowa to take the next steps in developing the program. I will do my part to support Double Up Food Bucks in my community and bring its multiple benefits to the attention of other legislators as we consider expanded state support in the future, so all Iowans can participate and strengthen rural communities and our farm economy. I praise the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative for taking a leadership role in supporting farmers’ markets as they demonstrate the value of healthy eating.”

Iowa Department of Human Services: The Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) is proud to be a part of Double Up Food Bucks by utilizing the successful Wireless EBT Project to introduce new, innovative technology that accepts EBT and the Double Up gift cards. SNAP recipients are able to shop and spend their EBT benefits at 30 farmers stands, at the Downtown Des Moines Farmers Market. DHS is excited that Double Up will give SNAP families the ability to consume more Iowa-grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

Iowa Department of Public Health: “The Double Up Food Bucks Program is an investment in health. Providing Iowans more opportunities to make healthy food choices and enjoy the freshest, local produce benefits families, farmers and communities.” – Doris Montgomery, Nutritionist and Coordinator, Iowa Nutrition Network (SNAP-Ed)

Food Bank of Iowa: The least expensive foods are often the least nutritious, and nutrition becomes a low priority when an individual is forced to stretch his or her grocery budget. Innovative initiatives that provide better access to fresh fruits and vegetables are vital to the nutrition of Iowans struggling with food insecurity. The Double Up Food Bucks program provides local, healthy food to Iowans in need, while also supporting Iowa farmers and the communities where they live, creating a double positive for our entire state.

Iowa Farmers Market Association: “The Iowa Farmers Market Association welcomes the expansion of the Double Up Food Bucks Program into Iowa. The program dovetails nicely with other programs in Iowa to provide increased buying power for those in need while providing another source of market income for participating markets and vendors.” – Donna Brahms, President, Iowa Farmers Market Association

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – “Whether you’re looking to cook more with fresh produce or plan meals to save money, we’re here to help. ISU Extension and Outreach has tools to make healthy eating fun for families across the state. We look forward to visiting with shoppers market this summer.” – Christine Hradek, State Coordinator for SNAP-Education, Iowa State University

2017 Double Up Food Bucks Participating Farmers Markets

Black Hawk County:

Greens to Go Non-profit Mobile Produce Stand, Waterloo, Iowa***

Clay County:

Spencer's Riverfront Farmers Market, Spencer, Iowa

Dubuque County:

Dubuque Farmers Market, Dubuque, Iowa

Johnson County:

Iowa City Farmers Markets, Iowa City, Iowa

Linn County:

Cedar Rapids Downtown Farmers Market, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Polk County:

Beaverdale Farmers Market, Des Moines, Iowa

Downtown Des Moines Farmers Market, Des Moines, IA***

Drake Neighborhood Farmers Market, Des Moines, IA

Lutheran Services in Iowa Global Greens Farmers Market, Des Moines, IA

Valley Junction Farmers Market, West Des Moines, IA

Poweshiek County:

Grinnell Farmers Market, Grinnell, Iowa

Tama County:

Red Earth Gardens, The local food source of the Meskwaki Nation, Tama, Iowa***

Winneshiek County:

Northeast Iowa Winneshiek Farmers Market, Decorah, Iowa

****Sites participating in the wireless SNAP-EBT and Double Up gift card transaction system pilot program*

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Double Up Food Bucks: Learn more about Double Up Food Bucks at www.iowahealthieststate.com/double-up-food-bucks which features a complete list of participating markets, an infographic showing how it works, and more. You can also call us at 515-309-3227 or email info@iowahealthieststate.com.

Iowa Healthiest State Initiative: Iowa Healthiest State Initiative is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization driven by the goal to make Iowa the healthiest state in the nation. By engaging worksites, communities, schools, retail food, organizations, institutions, and individuals, we can inspire Iowans and their communities to improve their health and happiness, and ultimately achieve our goal. For more information, visit www.iowahealthieststate.com.

AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa: AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa, part of the AmeriHealth Caritas Family of Companies, is one of the Medicaid managed care plans that participate in IA Health Link. AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa helps Iowans get proper care and stay well, working with communities in need to achieve positive health outcomes throughout the state. For more information, visit www.amerhealthcaritasia.com.

