

Rochester Public Market Shoppers Report Eating Healthier

City of Rochester - News Release

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(Friday, August 14, 2009) Mayor Robert J. Duffy congratulated the Friends of the Rochester Public Market today for a successful first year operating a program designed to give customers who receive food assistance benefits increased accessibility to fresh foods.

For the past year, citizens enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly known as food stamps) could use their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card to purchase affordable, fresh foods at several area farmers markets -- including the Rochester Public Market. Customers “swipe” their EBT cards at a central terminal at the Market to receive \$1 wooden tokens, which then function as cash at the Market. The EBT token program is made available to markets across the state through the Farmers Market Federation of New York thanks to funding from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

The enthusiasm for the token program has greatly exceeded expectations. \$132,680 worth of tokens have been purchased at the Rochester Public Market.

“This program helps us create “One City” by making fresh foods at the Public Market accessible to all people,” said Mayor Duffy. “We are grateful to the Friends of the Public Market, our volunteer organization, for their efforts in managing the Market Token Program.”

Customers who use their food assistance benefits to purchase food at the Rochester Public Market report eating healthier, according to our surveys,” said Andrew Johnson, President of the Friends of the Rochester Public Market. “More than half of the respondents report eating more vegetables and 48% report eating more fruit as a result of being able to purchase foods at the Public Market.”

The goal of this program is to enable SNAP customers to more easily obtain affordable, farm fresh foods which are an excellent and highly economical alternative to convenience or grocery stores. Tokens can be used to purchase foods that include fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy products, baked goods, processed foods, and even seeds and plants which produce foods.

More than 75% of the respondents report shopping at the Rochester Public Market more frequently as a result of the token program.

In addition to eating more fruits and vegetables, customers are purchasing healthier foods overall, including dairy foods, meat, fish and eggs. The program allows these Market shoppers to purchase more fresh fruit for their children who, along with eating

better, are learning about healthy eating. Shoppers say they can stretch their food dollars further and are able to buy more and better quality foods, especially fresh produce.

“This is a positive, win-win situation for everyone, both farmers and SNAP customers”, says Charles Reaves, Commissioner of Recreation and Youth Services for the City, “Now, SNAP customers have access to the freshest, healthiest produce and products that New York State has to offer.”

Anyone interested in joining the Friends of the Market is invited to call the Market office at 428-6907 or visit www.marketfriends.org .

The Rochester Public Market offers fresh, local foods year round and is open 6 a.m. – 1 p.m., Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 5 a.m. – 3 p.m. Saturdays.

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