

Success Story

State-Level Partnership Spotlight: Maine Harvest Bucks Promotion Project

SUMMARY

In FY 2017, the **Maine SNAP-Ed** Implementing Agency at the University of New England partnered with the **Office for Family Independence (OFI)** at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to provide state-level support to the **Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets (MFFM)** and **Maine Farmland Trust (MFT)** to encourage SNAP recipients to utilize Maine Harvest Bucks (MHB) at local farmers' markets and food cooperatives.

MHB are **nutrition incentives** (funded through the USDA's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Program) that allow SNAP/EBT shoppers to receive bonus dollars towards the purchase of local fruits and vegetables for every SNAP dollar spent.

The agencies provided targeted, customized information to SNAP recipients residing near four MHB locations: **Augusta Farmers' Market at Mill Park, Houlton Community Market, Rockland Farmers' Market, and Good Tern Co-op in Rockland**. MFT and MFFM **developed and printed postcards**; OFI supported the **targeted mailing to 6,933 SNAP recipients**; and Maine SNAP-Ed provided logistical support and on-site **nutrition education** for SNAP shoppers.

The collaborative effort **effectively inspired new SNAP shoppers and transactions**.



CHALLENGE

Obesity, diet-related disease, and other chronic disease are complex problems that require a multi-pronged solution. In Maine, **2 out of 3 adults and 41% of children are overweight or obese**. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines recognize that all sectors of society shape the environment where people eat, learn, live, play, shop, and work. To prevent and reduce obesity, SNAP-Ed implementing agencies must **partner with other sectors of influence to make changes across geographic levels**. All four agencies in this partnership share a common goal of encouraging SNAP recipients to access local fruits and vegetables to help address obesity and food insecurity.

MAINE



SNAP-Ed

Healthy Eating on a Budget

Maine SNAP-Ed

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education

Maine SNAP-Ed is a **USDA-funded program** that teaches low-income Mainers the knowledge and skills needed to make healthier lifestyle choices. The program has 30 Nutrition Educators throughout the state. They implement evidence-based youth and adult curricula and work collaboratively with community partners to make sustainable Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) changes to **reduce the burden of obesity across Maine**.

Maine Farmland Trust:

MFT is a statewide organization that protects farmland, supports farmers, and advances farming. Their goal is not just to protect Maine farmland, but to revitalize Maine's rural landscape by keeping agricultural lands working and helping farmers, and their communities, thrive.

Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets:

MFFM's mission is to cultivate a vibrant, sustainable farmers' market community as a vital part of Maine's local food network. The Federation works with farmers, consumers, and communities to make wholesome, locally-grown foods available to all residents, to educate consumers about food resources, and to support farm viability.

SOLUTION

The four closely-aligned state-level partners set a common goal: **Mail customized postcards to all SNAP recipients in high-need communities to draw SNAP recipients to local food venues in targeted sites.**

MFT and MFFM designed and printed the postcards. In mid-July, **OFI and Maine SNAP-Ed undertook the targeted mailing** to the three high-need communities and surrounding zip codes. In addition, **SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators provided series-based nutrition education** at the farmers' markets.

The postcards included **venue-specific details** related to location, hours of operation, acceptance of SNAP/EBT and family programming such as live music and children's story time. The postcards also included information on **giveaways designed to encourage participation** (cookbook, dining coupon, magazines) and photos of educators and market clerks were included to build familiarity with site procedures.



SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Preliminary results show an increase in first-time shoppers at two of the participating markets. The Augusta farmers' market had **52 new SNAP shoppers** (108% increase) and **142 SNAP transactions** (8% increase) in July and August, compared to the previous year. During the same time period, the Houlton Community Market had **32 new SNAP shoppers** (46% increase) and **63 SNAP transactions** (117% increase) compared to the previous year. The remaining sites experienced some challenges related to staffing and weather, and the partnering agencies will examine end-of-season data for a complete analysis of outcomes.

Going forward, the agencies will continue to collaborate on MHB promotions, incorporating lessons learned from this project and working together to identify ways to maximize resources and outcomes. All agencies recognize the **value of combining nutrition education with nutrition incentives**, and new opportunities for supporting shoppers at local venues will be explored.



PARTNERS IN SUCCESS

- Augusta Farmers' Market at Mill Park
- Houlton Community Market
- Rockland Farmers' Market
- Good Tern Co-op
- Chipotle
- Lee Auto Mall

"It was a great day at market!

The postcards brought in 14 new EBT customers, & I was super busy for the first few hours. I gave away 19 cookbooks and was able to explain the program to some new faces."

—Houlton Community Market staff

For more Success Stories from the Maine SNAP-Ed program, or to get in touch with your local Nutrition Educator, please visit www.mainesnap-ed.org.

Data sources are available upon request by emailing mainesnap-ed@une.edu.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Maine SNAP-Ed is funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which is administered by the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and implemented statewide by the University of New England (UNE) through contracts with local community coalitions. Maine SNAP-Ed educates low-income families on low cost, healthy eating and active lifestyles.