



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

June 19, 2015

Arkansas Departments/partners work together to promote better nutrition in food program

DHS mobile unit will be at Jonesboro farmers market June 23

The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Department of Health and the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention (ARCOP) are working together to promote better nutrition for Arkansans who use the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

About a dozen Arkansas farmers markets in Arkansas participate in the Double Dollars program. Double Dollars offers SNAP recipients the opportunity to double their food dollars when they use their SNAP Electronic Benefit Card (EBT) at the markets. The Double Dollars program has been available through the federal SNAP program for about five years, but its use is relatively new in Arkansas. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which runs SNAP, encourages farmers markets to seek out local partners to fund the Double Dollars program in their area. The program coincides with USDA's effort to have more farmers markets accept SNAP benefits. There are approximately 301 farmers markets in Arkansas and 61 currently accept SNAP.

"We are happy with the increase of farmers markets that are accepting SNAP," said Michele Rodgers, Arkansas Department of Human Services SNAP Outreach manager. "We've worked hard to add the markets. In 2014, just 15 markets accepted SNAP.

When the Double Dollars program is used in concert with SNAP, every dollar spent does at least double duty, providing a dollar in new sales for American family farmers and a dollar in real nutrition assistance, improving community health and keeping food dollars circulating in local economies.

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Six farmers markets across Arkansas are participating in the pilot project and have received funds for maintenance and operations with the stipulation they provide a double dollars program as a part of the pilot program to incentivize SNAP.

“Improved nutrition through fruits and vegetables is important for everyone, especially for families with limited food dollars, said Christine McKnelly, registered dietitian and co-chair of the Access to Healthy Food Workgroup for ARCOP “The Double Dollars option in SNAP gives families a way to stretch their benefits to choose healthy food options.”

Farmers markets being funded by the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention for the Double Dollars SNAP option are:

- Jonesboro -- ASU Regional Farmers Market
- Hot Springs – Historic downtown Farmers Market
- Pine Bluff – Saracen Landing Farmers Market
- Yellville – Yellville Farmers Market
- Little Rock – Bernice Gardens Farmers Market
- Fayetteville – Crossroads Farmers Market

In addition, The Wal-Mart Foundation has funded the Double Dollars option for six other farmers markets around the state this season. Those markets are:

- Bentonville – The Downtown Bentonville Farmers Market
- Siloam Springs – Siloam Springs Farmers Market
- Fayetteville – Green Fork Farmers Market, Fayetteville Farmers Market and the Wren Thicket Market
- Springdale – Springdale Farmers Market

The DHS Mobile Enrollment van will visit Jonesboro’s ASU Regional Farmers Market, 3350 Aggie Road, at the corner of Aggie Road and Red Wolf Boulevard (formerly Stadium Boulevard) from noon to 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23, 2015 during the market’s Double Buck Tuesday promotion. The farmers market hours are noon to 5:30 p.m.

The mobile unit allows Arkansans to sign up on the spot for the state’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as well as several other DHS programs. The van will be parked in front of the pavilion.

