

Durham Farmers' Market Double Bucks Program Increases Access to Fresh Produce

Durham Farmers' Market is reaching underserved populations through its Double Bucks program offered to customers that use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funds. Through innovative thinking about engaging the community and how to raise money to sustain the program, market staff and their partners have increased access to local and fresh food for all families and individuals in downtown Durham.



Challenge

“Everyone should have the opportunity to shop at a farmers’ market. Our job is to make it more accessible.”

— Kelly Warnock, Durham County Department of Public Health, Communications and Health Promotion Program Manager

Many chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer, are largely affected by nutrition. Lack of access to healthy food choices can increase the risk of these diseases and complications from them. One in ten Durham residents rely on SNAP funds every month to meet basic food needs. As of 2013, there were over 50,000 SNAP/(Electronic Benefits Transfer) EBT customers in Durham. Prior to 2013, the market didn't accept SNAP/EBT, making their fresh produce less accessible for a significant portion of Durham's population.

Solution

Beginning in 2014, the Durham Farmers' Market partnered with Durham County Department of Public Health to bring SNAP/EBT to the market. To increase accessibility, they began offering an incentive program, Double Bucks, to match up to \$10 to help SNAP customers stretch their dollar even further. This means that if a SNAP customer spends \$10, they get \$20 worth of fresh food.

Sweeten Up Your Summer with
**Fruits and Veggies...
More Matters!**

Get up to **\$10 FREE**
every time you use your EBT **\$10 = \$20!**

Durham Farmers' Market 501 Foster Street Saturdays 8am-12pm Wednesdays 3pm-6pm	South Durham Farmers' Market 410 NC Hwy 55 Saturdays 8am-12pm
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Public Health Durham County Department of Public Health Nutrition Division (919) 565-7837
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US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) is an equal opportunity provider.

Results

“For me, Double Bucks is really important. It helps me afford to eat healthier.”

— Double Bucks shopper, mom of two children

Durham Farmers' Market and its partners are excited to provide access to fresh, healthy food to more of the community. Vendors and new customers alike are benefiting from and expressing their appreciation of the program. The Double Bucks program helped to bring in over 300 SNAP/EBT customers per year from 2014 – 2016. Over \$46,000 worth of healthy foods was purchased with SNAP/EBT and Double Bucks from the summer of 2014 through the summer of 2016.

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How Durham Farmers' Market Did It and How You Can Too

Formula for Sustainability:

- Funding
- Promotion
- Community buy-in
- Customer comfort level
- Outreach staff

To build a successful, sustainable program and foster customer loyalty, make sure customers can rely on the benefits you offer (e.g., Double Bucks) week after week.

Partner up to raise program funds.

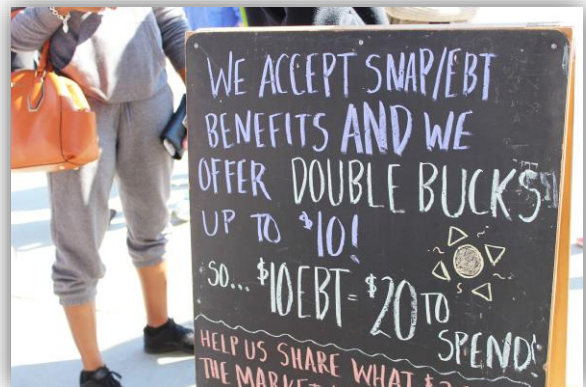
Durham's Double Bucks program was initiated through a partnership with Rural Advancement Foundation International, the Durham Farmers' Market, Durham County Department of Public Health and South Durham Farmers' Market. These organizations worked with local nonprofits to secure Double Bucks funding.

- Local sponsorships (Burt's Bees Greater Good Foundation, Duke Doing Good in the Neighborhood, Durham Diabetes Coalition)
- Benefit events including a crop walk and costume contest
- Individual donations through an internet crowdfunding campaign
- Durham Market's ATM surcharge is donated to Double Bucks

See the Durham County [Double Bucks Timeline](http://eatSMARTmoveMoreNC.com/FarmersMarkets) at eatSMARTmoveMoreNC.com/FarmersMarkets for more on program funding.

Keep proven promotional methods, and find new ways to promote each year.

- Durham Farmers' Market had a soft launch of the program without advertising to work out the kinks first, and then planned for their big kickoff once their system was running smoothly.
- 2014 Double Bucks launch involved
 - Radio station broadcast from the farmers' market
 - Free shuttle bus to the market for six Saturdays
 - Press releases to the media
 - Benefit events which attracted more customers and earned media time
 - Bus ads posted in English and Spanish
 - Flyers disseminated to the public
 - Radio ads on local stations
 - Postcards sent to targeted potential customers advertising Double Bucks and a free tote bag
- New areas of promotion in 2017 include increasing connections with community partners and residents. The market is reaching out to the Center for Senior Living, Welcome Babies, Backpack Buddies, a low-income apartment complex, a refugee settlement agency, food pantries, schools and a Spanish radio station.
- Promotional materials can help to address barriers that may arise over time. For example, as downtown Durham has increased in popularity and paid parking was installed, Durham's 2017 fliers added a message to let customers know where they can access free parking.
- See the [Double Bucks Timeline](#) for an overview of program promotion since 2013.



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Get community buy-in from partners and community residents.

The Double Bucks Program has garnered much community support and has worked in partnership with the Durham County Department of Public Health, Transition Durham, Durham CAN, and the South Durham Farmers' Market.

For your farmers' market, make sure potential partners and other stakeholders understand your mission to be inclusive and your approach to accomplishing this mission. Dispel stereotypes about who shops at a farmers' markets. Show community partners and elected officials that the market is inviting and comfortable for all potential customers.

Communicate with partners who support the program frequently and consistently, and be sure to engage them in special events. Fundraisers can double as celebrations with events from adult-friendly dinners with local chefs to kid-friendly chicken poop bingo. Keeping the activities that take place at the farmers' market light, has helped to create an appealing environment for all Durham residents.



Address the comfort level of your priority/potential customers.

Excellent customer service and friendly smiles have gone a long way toward creating an inviting environment and a pleasant experience for customers who may feel that a visit to the farmers' market is outside their comfort zone.

For those using SNAP/EBT and Double Bucks, seamless transactions are key. SNAP/EBT, along with the automatic Double Bucks benefits, are exchanged for tokens at one location in the farmers' market and then used to purchase goods from different vendors. Clear SNAP/EBT signage denotes vendors that accept tokens. To ensure that token transactions are convenient and handled as "business as usual" for customers, staff have trained vendors on the process of accepting of tokens for payment.

Invest in the program, and secure staff for consistent community outreach and continued problem solving.

Changing farmers' market culture takes time. To get and maintain traction on your efforts, it is important to have staff time devoted to 1) ensuring a warm, welcoming environment for a diverse customer base and 2) handling issues that arise as changes are implemented. Durham Farmers' Market recognized the importance of reaching Durham residents that rely on SNAP, and in 2016, hired a Food Programs Coordinator to do community outreach.

To make the case for hiring and keeping a community outreach coordinator, the potential impact needs to be demonstrated. A good tracking system to help you determine the reach of your program is imperative. Durham Farmers' Market tracked the last four digits of customers' EBT, their zip codes, the amount they spent and dates of purchase in order to track and confirm that SNAP/EBT customers are, in fact, coming back to the market.

For more information, please contact info@durhamfarmersmarket.com.