

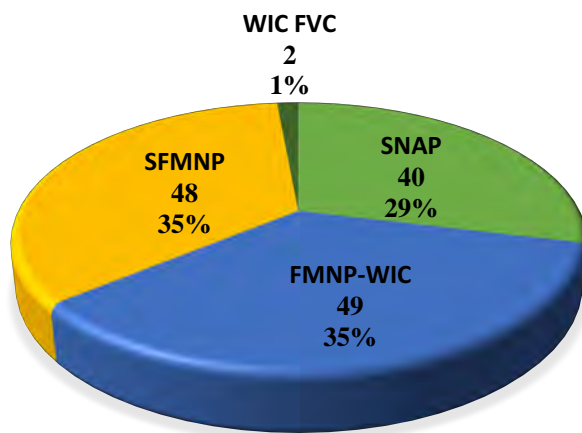
Improving Food Access in Brooklyn Park

Summer 2016

In summer 2016, Anne Arundel County Public Schools and the Community Education and Health Equity Program at the Anne Arundel County Department of Health undertook a multifaceted approach to tackle food insecurity in the northern part of the county. While school was out of session for the summer, they partnered with Brooklyn Park Middle School to serve as a site for Summer Meals, a United States Department of Agriculture program offering free meals for youth ages 2-18. To address the limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the area, several county agencies collaborated to organize a weekly farmers market (11 a.m. – 2 p.m.) in conjunction with the Summer Meals program held on Mondays. Community-supported agriculture (CSA) produce bags were also available for purchase each week.

The Farmers Market

To encourage market attendance and increase the market's capacity to serve as a food access venue, the market applied to participate in the Maryland Farmers Market Association's Maryland Market Money program, a program that provides matching dollars to Maryland residents using their federal nutrition benefits at participating farmers markets. These additional dollars not only help food-insecure Maryland residents purchase more local, fresh food at the market but simultaneously support Maryland's rich agricultural economy by providing additional sales to local producers.

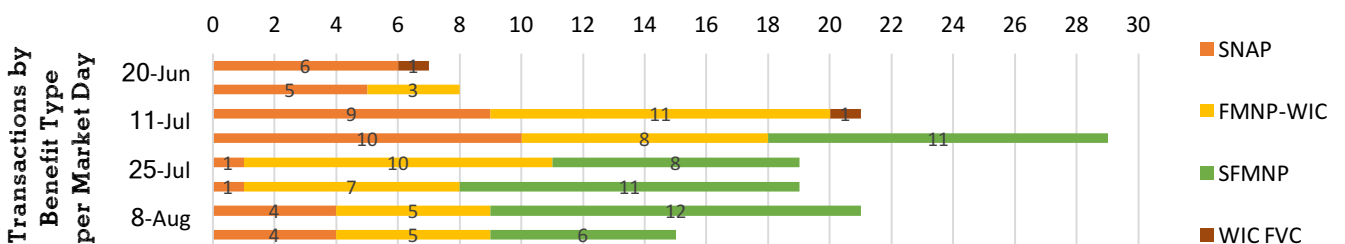


Total Transactions by Benefit Type
Total transactions for the season by customers using benefits: 139

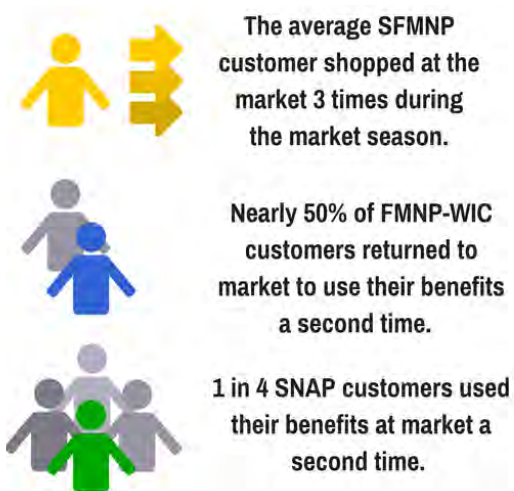
The program matches supplemental nutrition benefits from three federal programs:

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP**, formerly known as Food Stamps and often referred to as 'EBT')
- **Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) via Fruit and Vegetable Checks (FVC)**
- **Farmers Market Nutrition Program** for both WIC participants (FMNP-WIC) and income-eligible Seniors (SFMNP)

The chart below shows transactions by benefit type per market day. Because SFMNP checks are distributed in early July, this type of benefit did not appear at the market until mid-July. The respective low and high numbers of WIC FVC and FMNP transactions at the market reflect the general trend at all Maryland Market Money (MMM) markets. SNAP transactions peaked mid-July, then generally fell off towards the end of market season.



The farmers market was extremely successful in attracting new benefits customers during the first half of the market season and converting these first-time shoppers into repeat benefits customers. For example, first-time shoppers comprised 65 percent of total transactions made by customers using benefits at market in the first four weeks of the market season. In contrast, first-time shoppers comprised just 39 percent of total transactions made by customers using benefits at market during the final four weeks of the market season, despite a 14 percent increase in total transactions.



**Farmers Market Attendance
Summer 2016**

Market Date	Attendance
June 20	125
June 27	175
July 11	275
July 18	275
July 25	177
August 1	155
August 8	145
August 15	205
TOTAL	1,532



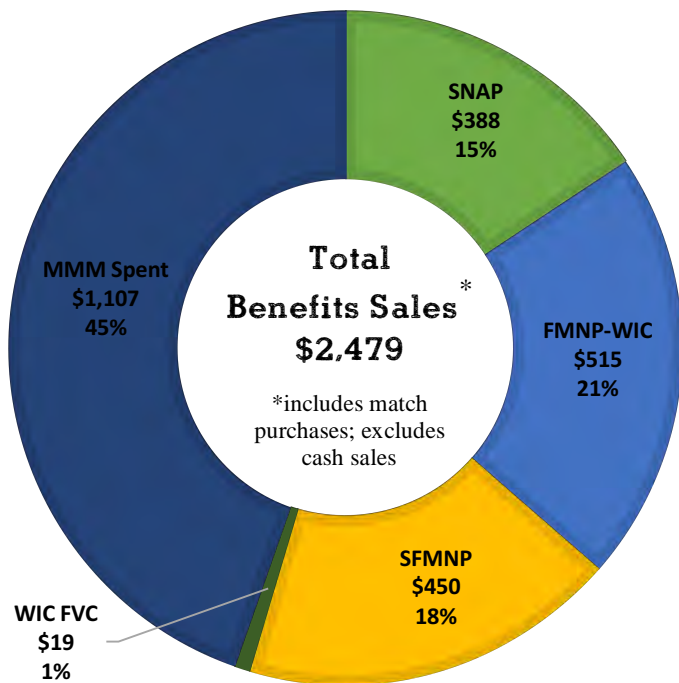
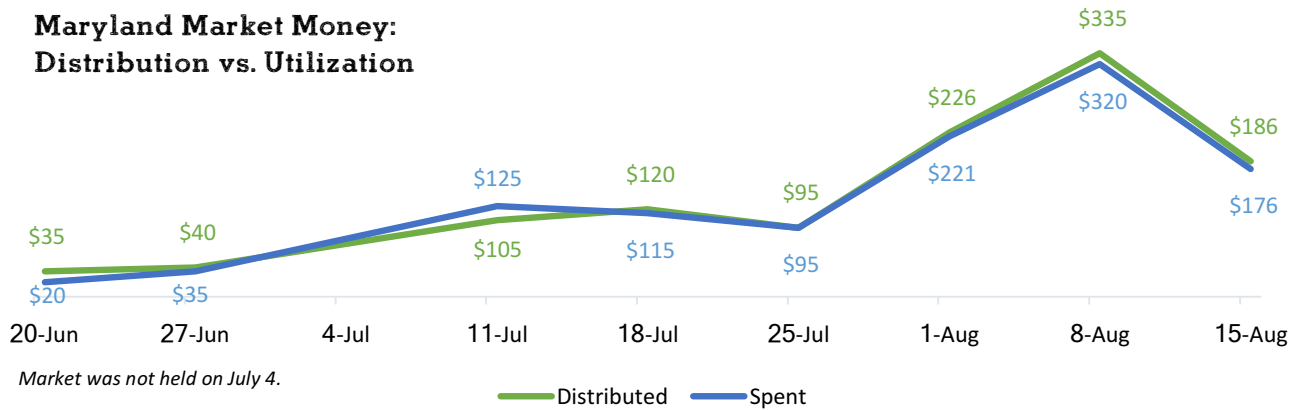
During the eight weeks the market was in operation, market staff distributed a total of \$1,142 in matching dollars via the MMM program. Customers spent 97 percent of these bonus dollars at the market. The graph on page 3 tracks matching dollars spent against those distributed per market day, demonstrating that most customers received and spent their match on the same day.

\$1,142
Maryland Market
Money distributed

97%
of dollars distributed
were spent at market

Comparatively, customers tend to save matching dollars to spend later in the season at other markets. Market season duration may have been a major factor influencing the Brooklyn Park Farmers Market customers to develop alternative spending patterns. Because the market was a short, eight week season, customers may have been more inclined to spend their match immediately if they were unsure if they would be able to return before the market ended.

**Maryland Market Money:
Distribution vs. Utilization**



Benefit sales increased from week to week with the exception of the July 25 and August 15 market days. This steady increase can be partially attributed to a shift in matching policy that went into effect on August 1. The market began the season with a \$5 cap on all matches but increased to an unlimited match in August. This boosted MMM sales to nearly half of all benefit sales at the market.

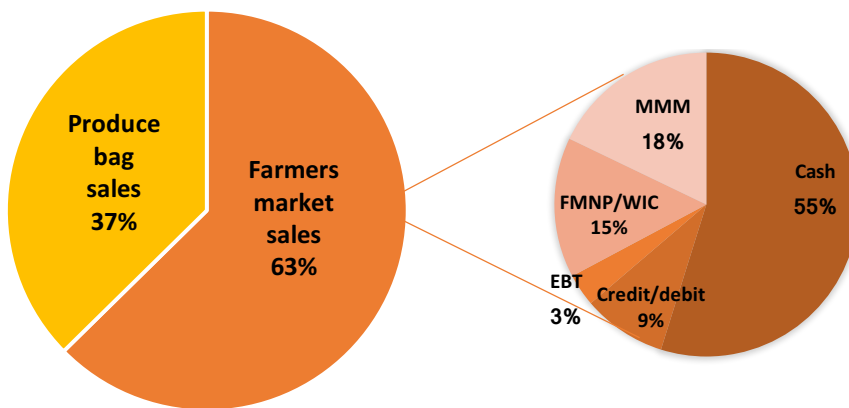
**Average
benefits sale
per customer
\$17.83**

Community-Supported Agriculture

In addition to the farmers market, community members had the opportunity to purchase fresh produce via a CSA share, each with a featured recipe. Planning organizations arranged for weekly bags of produce to be available for \$20; an average of 15 bags were purchased each week. During the market season, 33 families picked up a weekly \$7.50 bag of produce, the cost of which was covered courtesy of grant funding. All produce was sourced from Shlagel Farms.

Given the absence of an existing customer base, first-year farmers markets are often risky undertakings for farmers. However, the dual market opportunity (farmers market and CSA) combined with the extensive outreach and promotion strategy employed by planning organizations ensured success for Shlagel Farms.

Sample Breakdown of Sales



Percentages were calculated based on one day’s sales as reported by the participating produce farmer. Breakdown includes sales from the CSA-style produce bags.

Summer Meals

Throughout the market season, Food and Nutrition Services of Anne Arundel County Public Schools provided free meals at Brooklyn Park Middle School. The program offered breakfast, lunch and mobile meals to youth ages 2-18.



864

breakfasts were served



1,583

lunches were served



2,801

mobile meals were served

Outreach and Promotion

The success of the collaborative endeavors to improve food access in the Brooklyn Park community was a result of strong outreach and promotion initiatives.

Planning organizations cultivated a strong media presence. Highlights included newspaper articles and cable TV spotlights. Radio advertisements, website, Twitter and Facebook posts helped drive traffic throughout the season as well.

Magnets advertising the market were provided to 750 student homes during a Brooklyn Park Middle School Community Walk.

The Department of Health’s Housing and Food Protection staff distributed 800 fliers going door-to-door in the Belle Grove Community.

Within the Healthy Anne Arundel Coalition (including Obesity Prevention and Community Engagement Coalition Subcommittees), members received email announcements and fliers about the food access initiatives in Brooklyn Park.

Recommendations

To build on 2016's success, the planning organizations propose the following recommendations:

- Designate and commit five market team members to attend market data collection training with Maryland Farmers Market Association (MDFMA) prior to the market opening day.
- Develop strategy and materials for tracking market attendance with assistance from MDFMA.
- Continue to provide up to \$5 in matching dollars to customers using federal nutrition benefits via participation in MDFMA's MMM program.
- Increase the number of market days from eight to eleven.
- Work with Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities to:
 - increase the number of days their staff can be present at market to distribute SFMNP coupons from three to six;
 - schedule distribution dates in advance to allow for wide promotion; and
 - increase the number of field trips from the Brooklyn Park Senior Center to the farmers market from one to four.
- Develop a flier that lists all Anne Arundel County farmers markets for distribution to county residents.
- Work with community groups and agencies to expand partnerships and support of the market. For example:
 - Partner with two churches to arrange field trips for parishioners.
 - Recruit local organizations to list Brooklyn Park Farmers Market in electronic market listings.
- Develop a strategy to grow a loyal customer base of frequent shoppers using all forms of payment.

Planning Organizations



ANNE ARUNDEL
COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Thank you to all project partners who played a role in this season's success:

Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities ✪ Anne Arundel County Public Library ✪ Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks ✪ Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation ✪ Brooklyn Park Senior Center ✪ Chesapeake Arts Center ✪ Maryland Hunger Solutions ✪ Maryland State Department of Education ✪ Northern Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce ✪ Share Our Strength