

# MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION

## MIFMA Recognized for EBT Work

In recognition of their efforts to increase the number of farmers markets serving Michigan Bridge Card clients, MIFMA and its partnering organizations were recently awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

"We worked very hard over the last year to make local food more accessible to those who need it most through Michigan farmers markets," said Dru Montri, MIFMA project manager. "To see that work be recognized is such an honor."

"We felt that they were very deserving for their accomplishments this past year," said Dick Gilbert of the USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) Midwest Regional Office, who awarded Montri the certificate on February 8, 2008.

The coalition, led by MIFMA and the Michigan Food Policy Council, provided special assistance to five farmers markets - the Fremont Farmers Market, Marquette Farmers' and Artists' Market, Downtown Saginaw Farmers' Market, Downtown Ypsilanti



Dru Montri accepts the Certificate of Appreciate from Dick Gilbert of USDA FNS.

Farmer's Markets and the Lansing City Market - in 2007 as part of a community demonstration project. The goal was to help markets become authorized, approved and equipped to accept Bridge Cards, which has been challenging for farmers markets as the program moved to the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system as opposed to the paper coupons. Many other Michigan farmers markets benefited from a June training and the toolkit provided.

In 2006, three of Michigan's 150 farmers markets were approved to use Bridge Cards.

"We now have 11 markets, due directly to the work of MIFMA, its partners and Dru Montri's

leadership," said Gilbert. "She pulled together food and farm issue groups and led a very good coalition."

That doesn't always happen in these kinds of groups, he said, but because of the dedication that Montri and partners put forth, the EBT project has been extremely successful. The group was very productive in developing information that clearly explained the steps needed to help farmers markets get involved in using Bridge Cards.

An EBT workshop for farmers markets, along with a lot of technical assistance and personal contact, made that information accessible and very specific in what farmers markets had to do and the steps they had

to take to accept Bridge Cards at their markets.

"She [Montri] held their hands as they were going through an uncomfortable process and continually followed up with them to make sure it happened," said Gilbert.

Of the six states in the Midwest that this USDA FNS regional office serves, Michigan is leading in Bridge Card acceptance at farmers markets because of this work.

"I think that the numbers of markets accepting Bridge Cards will only grow from here and that we'll continue to see an impact on the overall health and wellbeing of these communities," said Montri.

*Project funding by: Marquette County Health Department-Active Living Task Force, the Michigan (MI) Department of Community Health and the MI Food Policy Council.*

*Partners for this project included: MIFFS, MI State University, MI Food Policy Council, MI Department of Community Health, MI Department of Human Services, USDA FNS and ACS Governmental Solutions.*

### What's Happening?

• **Feb. 29 – Mar. 1, 2008**  
Michigan Organic Conference.  
See [www.moffa.org](http://www.moffa.org)

• **Feb. 29 – Mar. 8, 2008**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources Week. See [www.canr.msu.edu/anrweek/](http://www.canr.msu.edu/anrweek/).

• **March 4, 2008**  
Farmers Market Manager Training.

• **March 4, 2008**  
MIFFS Annual Meeting, 7 p.m., Kellogg Center, visit [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org).

• **March 5, 2008**  
Plain Language Health Literacy Seminar. See <http://mnn.fcs.msu.edu/resources.html>.

• **March 8, 2008**  
CSA Training in Ann Arbor, MI. See [www.csafarms.org](http://www.csafarms.org)

### Direct Marketing through On-Farm and Farmers Markets

• April 5, 2008: 9 AM to 12 PM, Van Buren County Extension Meeting Room, Paw Paw, MI

• April 14, 2008: 4 to 7 PM, Detroit area

• April 16th, 4 to 7 PM, Genesee County Extension Office, Flint

• **May 30, 2008**  
Designing Healthy Livable Communities Conference.

For more information regarding these listings, call 517-432-3381.

The Michigan Farmers Market Association advances farmers markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. Our vision is to place farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement and to ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food and that Michigan farmers markets receive policy support.



# MIFMA Member of the Month!

## Sweetwater Local Foods Market

An Interview with Diana Jancek, Market Manager, and Chris Bedford, President



**Q: The Sweetwater Local Foods Market has a message of “Healthy. Humane. Homegrown.” Can you explain what this philosophy means and how it makes you unique in this world of Michigan farmers markets?**

A: The Sweetwater philosophy is expressed according to four key values:

1. All foods and products are produced as naturally as possible avoiding use of inorganic chemicals, growth hormones, GMOs and antibiotics.
2. Animals are raised in ways that respect their natures.
3. All food and products sold in the market are locally produced. If no local product (within 40 miles) exists, then the market will allow vendors to contract with producers within the state of Michigan.
4. Transparency will govern all aspects of the market. Starting a market with these four key values makes the market day an opportunity to educate customers about every aspect of food production. The conversations that are taking place at our market are truly inspiring. People who come to the market are starting to feel like they are part of building a new community around food.

**Q: Your market operates year-round. How have you made a winter market work? What advice would you give to other markets?**

A: We were lucky to be partnered with a hospital that “got it” and had the perfect building to be able to go indoors in the winter. My advice to other markets would be to survey your customers first and ask if they would support a winter market. If the answer you get is positive, start looking for a place. Keep your customers in the loop through the whole process in order to build excitement and maybe even to help find that

perfect location. The great thing about having a winter market is that people are now committing year round to buying more of their food locally. In order to keep their loyalty we are constantly looking to fill the niches - for instance our newest vendor brings vac-packed fresh fish from the Great Lakes.

**Q: The Sweetwater Local Foods Market is one of eleven farmers markets in the state that accepts Bridge Cards. Why was it important for you to be able to do this?**

A: Muskegon County has several large areas in the city of both Muskegon and Muskegon Heights that have zero access to local fresh food. We wanted to be able to serve everyone, regardless of income level.

**Q: Your market has joined MIFMA at the \$150 farmers market level. Has it been worth the investment? Why is it important to you for your market to be involved in MIFMA?**

A: We feel that it is important to support this new initiative in order to strengthen and promote Michigan farmers markets.

**Q: (to Chris) As the president and selected representative of the Sweetwater Local Foods Market, you were recently elected to the first MIFMA board of directors. What do you think is the most exciting aspect of being involved in the leadership of MIFMA?**

A: MIFMA is a gathering of some of the best, most creative and dynamic leaders of the Local Food Revolution in Michigan. Our meetings, both formal and informal, are both a source of wisdom and great inspiration to me in my work. MIFMA rocks.

## Welcome New Members!

MIFMA would like to welcome its new members for the month of February 2008.

### Farmers Market members

- City of Au Gres
- Farmers Market of Dearborn
- Highland Park Farmers Market
- Kalamazoo Farmers Market
- Leelanau Farmers Market
- Old School Farmers Market, Allegan

### Farmer/Vendor members

- Bob and Julie Demeulenaere

### Friends of MIFMA

- Thomas Dudek
- Donna McClurkan

To join MIFMA, visit [www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu](http://www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu)!