



# MICHIGAN FARMERS MARKET ASSOCIATION

## Accepting Food Stamps at Your Farmers Market

On Wednesday, June 13<sup>th</sup> nearly thirty people representing fourteen Michigan farmers markets, MSU extension and county health departments came together to learn more about accepting Food Stamps or Bridge Cards at farmers markets. Participants were excited to learn about how accepting Bridge Cards can be a win-win-win situation. Food stamp program recipients benefit from increased access to fresh, local products. Farmers and vendors benefit from having more federal dollars spent at their stands and the dollars spent re-circulate in the community benefiting the local economy.

In the past farmers markets were able to accept paper food stamp coupons, but the recent conversion to the electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card system has proved challenging for many markets. Food stamp customers use a plastic card similar to a bank debit card to buy goods. The card used in Michigan shows the Mackinac Bridge and is therefore commonly called the Bridge Card. The training focused on how farmers markets can use EBT and alternative redemption systems to accept Bridge Cards.

The training was held at the Foster Community Center in Lansing, MI and led by Judith Bridger, the Food Project Coordinator at Allen Neighborhood Center. Allen Street Farmer's Market has been a leader in accepting Bridge Cards with more than three years of experience behind them. Jennifer Renegar, from USDA Food and Nutrition Service, and Jim McCreight, from



Judith Bridger (L) and Julia Herzog (R) demonstrate the process Allen Street Farmer's Market uses for accepting Bridge Cards.

the Michigan Department of Human Services, were also present to discuss how markets become authorized to accept food stamps and the process for state approval to operate an alternative redemption system.

Markets interested in learning more about accepting food stamps are invited to visit the [www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu](http://www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu) "Resource Page" for links to helpful documents. The materials distributed at the training are also available upon request by contacting Dru Montri at [dnmontri@msu.edu](mailto:dnmontri@msu.edu) or 517-432-3381.

*Partners in this training included*

*Michigan Food and Farming Systems, Michigan State University, Michigan Food Policy Council, Allen Street Farmer's Market, Allen Neighborhood Center, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Human Services, United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service and ACS Governmental Solutions.*

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MIFMA, in collaboration with partners Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) and the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University, recently received a food safety mini-grant through Michigan State University to focus on food safety at Michigan farmers markets.

Read more online at [www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu](http://www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu).

### What's Happening?

- **July 12, 2007:**  
"Buy Local Farmers Market," Michigan State Capitol lawn, Lansing, MI. [lipej@michigan.gov](mailto:lipej@michigan.gov) or (517) 373-9790
- **July 17-19, 2007:**  
Ag Expo at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. [www.agexpo.msu.edu](http://www.agexpo.msu.edu).
- **August 22, 2007:**  
"Select Michigan Farmers Market," Henry Ford Hospital, Grand Blvd Campus, Detroit. [lipej@michigan.gov](mailto:lipej@michigan.gov) or (517) 373-9790
- **August 22-29, 2007:**  
Michigan State Fair Blue Ribbon Farmers Market, Michigan State Fairgrounds, Detroit. [lipej@michigan.gov](mailto:lipej@michigan.gov) or (517) 373-9790
- **August 29-30, 2007:**  
Building Healthy Soils In Vegetable and Grain Crops for Organic and Sustainable Systems, Morgan Composting, Sears, MI. [www.michiganorganic.msu.edu](http://www.michiganorganic.msu.edu)
- **September 13, 2007:**  
"Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day" Farmers Market, Michigan State Capitol lawn, Lansing, MI. [lipej@michigan.gov](mailto:lipej@michigan.gov) or (517) 373-9790

For more information regarding any of these listings, call the MIFFS office at 517-432-0712.

The Michigan Farmers Market Association advances farmers' markets to create a thriving marketplace for local food and farm products. Visit [www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu](http://www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu) to learn more about MIFMA. Michigan Food & Farming Systems received a grant from the Project for Public Spaces to start MIFMA. Learn more at [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org).

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