



**Michigan Food &
Farming Systems-MIFFS**

Bringing Farmers & Communities Together

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 18, 2008

NEWS RELEASE

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MIFMA and Partnering Organizations Recognized for Serving Bridge Card Clients at Michigan Farmers Markets

EAST LANSING, MI – In recognition of their efforts to increase the number of farmers markets serving Michigan Bridge Card clients, the Michigan Farmers Market Association (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 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. The markets directly involved in the project included the Fremont Farmers Market, Marquette Farmers’ and Artists’ Market, Downtown Saginaw Farmers’ Market, Downtown Ypsilanti Farmer’s Markets, and the Lansing City Market. Many other Michigan farmers markets benefited from a June training and the toolkit provided.

In 2006, three of the approximately 150 farmers markets in the state of Michigan 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.



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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.

This project was funded through a grant from the Marquette County Health Department – Active Living Task Force, the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Food Policy Council. Partners in this work included Michigan Food & Farming Systems – MIFFS, Michigan State University, Michigan Food Policy Council, Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan Department of Human Services, USDA FNS and ACS Governmental Solutions.

MIFMA is supported by a grant from Project for Public Spaces, Inc., with funding provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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Founded in 1998, MIFFS is a statewide membership organization (501c3) whose purpose is to promote diverse efforts that foster and sustain food and farming systems that improve economic, ecological and social well-being. MIFFS has been effective at establishing successful partnerships among producers, markets and institutions that have created more profitable, environmentally friendly food systems in Michigan.

The organization’s vision is based on the premise that agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan’s rural and urban communities. To learn more, please visit www.miffs.org or call (517) 432-0712.