

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Project FRESH Starts!

Coldwater, MI. At a time when every dollar counts, you can count on **Project FRESH!** **FRESH** stands for Farm Resources Expanding and Supporting Health. This nutrition education program is offered through the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency and in conjunction with Michigan State University Extension Services (MSU-E). **Project FRESH** puts fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables into the hands of young families who qualify for WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program.

How do I qualify for Project FRESH? The process is simple! If you are a WIC recipient, just stop by your local health department office and pick up your coupon book. Each coupon book contains 15 - \$2 coupons which can be used at any participating farmer's market. Look for the laminated yellow poster stating: "**Project FRESH Coupons Accepted Here.**" In FY 2011, 112 Michigan farmers' markets, 130 roadside stands and 1,529 Michigan farmers were authorized to accept WIC **Project FRESH** Coupons.

If you aren't enrolled in WIC, but are pregnant or have a child up to age five, contact your local health department office to find out if you qualify. According to Jo Ann Wilczynski, Prevention Services Director at the district health department "We believe, based upon the tri-county's free and reduced lunch statistics, that many families with young children living in our area do qualify for WIC. We know that in some school districts, as many as 70%-80% of the students in the elementary grades qualify for free and reduced lunches. The income guidelines used for WIC are the same as those used to determine eligibility for the school-based free and reduced lunch programs."

What may be purchased with Project FRESH coupons? Participants may buy locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, but are especially encouraged to buy broccoli, carrots, potatoes, squash, peaches, apples and tomatoes. A variety of produce rich in vitamins A, C, and folic acid are emphasized. Current allowable herbs include: Basil, Cilantro, Dill, Lemon Grass, Marjoram, Mint, Oregano, Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, Summer Savory, Sorrel, Tarragon and Thyme. Sarah Johnson, Extension Educator, conducts educational sessions to assist participants in understanding how the program works. She says “Fresh foods are full of nutrients and important vitamins. Eating a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables is important for developing healthy bodies and eating Michigan grown produce keeps both you and the economy healthy!” The following local Farmer’s Markets are accepting **Project FRESH coupons**:

Branch County

Hoff’s Vegetable Farm
538 Marshall Road
Coldwater, Michigan 49036
(517) 278-2011

Hillsdale County

Glei’s Orchard and Greenhouses
3500 Milnes Rd.
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517)437-4495

St. Joseph County

Byler’s Farm Market
21738 Us Highway 12
Sturgis, MI 49091-9295
(269) 651-8338

WIC is a health and nutrition program that has demonstrated a positive effect on pregnancy outcomes, child growth and development. If you are income eligible and are: pregnant, recently delivered a baby, or are breastfeeding, you qualify for the program... and so do your children up to age five! To learn more about the WIC program, go to our website at www.bhsj.org. Make the most of your money! Sign up for WIC and Project FRESH today! It just makes good cents!

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