

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

June 3, 2014

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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 is short for Farm Resources Expanding and Supporting Health. This nutrition education and supplemental food 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).

Through Project FRESH!, each participant will receive a coupon book which is redeemable at participating farmer's markets. Each coupon book contains 10- \$2 coupons which can be used at any participating farmer's market between June 1 and October 31st. To redeem the coupons, 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. According to Dave Fowler, WIC Coordinator at the tri-county health department, "Currently we have 12 vendors within the three counties that are accepting Project FRESH! Coupons. However, coupons can be used anywhere in the State where the yellow laminated sign is posted."

The process to qualify for **Project FRESH** is simple! If you are a WIC recipient, just stop by your local health department office and pick up your coupon book. 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. Once you have qualified for WIC you will also be eligible for the Project FRESH coupons and many other tools that will help you to prepare healthy meals for you and your family.

Project FRESH! participants may buy locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, which is healthy for their bodies, and for the local economy. Dave adds “We would like to encourage participants to buy broccoli, carrots, potatoes, squash, peaches, apples and tomatoes. These produce are rich in vitamins A, C, and folic acid. They are also bountiful within our area.” Participants can also use their coupons to purchase herbs, such as: 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!”

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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