



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## Governor Cuomo Announces \$350,000 in Awards Under the FreshConnect Farmers' Market Program; Program Increases Access to Farm Fresh Products; SNAP Recipients Get 40% More in Benefits by Shopping at Participating Farmers' Markets

VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY May 16, 2014

| ISSUE: **AGRICULTURE**

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo this week announced more than \$350,000 under the FreshConnect Farmers' Market program to fund 17 farmers' markets across the state and provide valuable incentives for SNAP participants and veterans. Currently in its fourth year, the FreshConnect Farmers' Market program has increased capacity for farmers to directly market their products to consumers while providing New Yorkers in underserved communities with new opportunities to purchase farm fresh products.

This year, the FreshConnect Request for Proposals (RFP) focuses on supporting traditional farmers' markets and youth market grant projects across the state. Under this initiative, new and existing farmers' markets and not-for-profits applied for up to \$10,000, and those with the best ideas on how to improve access to markets participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were awarded funding.

In addition, more than \$200,000 in "FreshConnect Checks" will be released this year to serve low-income families across the state, including, for the first time, \$50,000 will be directed to

veterans of all ages. Checks will be distributed through veterans' facilities beginning this summer based on proximity to eligible farmers' markets.

The "FreshConnect Checks" program encourages recipients to use their SNAP benefits at participating farmers' markets by providing an additional \$2 in incentive coupons for every \$5 in SNAP benefits spent at a participating farmer's market. In 2013, over \$3.2 million in SNAP sales occurred at farmers' markets throughout the state. In addition to SNAP, FreshConnect-funded projects aim to ensure that all New Yorkers, regardless of income, have access to fresh fruits and vegetables and are encouraged to accept other nutrition incentives, such as Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Fruit & Vegetable Checks, Farmers' Market Nutrition Program checks, and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition checks.

A summary of award winners is below:

Bellevue Preservation, Inc., Schenectady, \$3,500: The project will sponsor and operate the Bellevue Farmers' Market in the Bellevue neighborhood of Schenectady.

Foodlink, Inc., Rochester, \$10,000: The project includes refining the current farm stand selection to improve efficiency; providing a youth workforce development component (partnering with the City of Rochester Bureau of Youth Services); and building a marketing campaign for Fresh Connect Checks (FCC).

South Wedge Planning Committee, Inc., Rochester, \$10,000: The Westside Farmers' Market Local Sourcing Expansion Project will organize and establish a cooperative farm stand to increase access of local product to customers and provide opportunities for farmers to sell products when they are unable to attend in-person. Development of new marketing initiatives to engage low-income families with young children will also occur.

Philmont Beautification, Inc./Philmont Farmers' Market Program, Philmont, \$9,760: The project will develop, implement, and expand existing strategies of marketing and communication to support collaborating between the Philmont Farmers' Market with those operated by the Philmont Market and Café Cooperative, which is a direct-market producer/consumer food cooperative in the Village of Philmont. The project will provide opportunities for NYS farmers to sell products by increasing the number of days for farmers' markets to include Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, from May through December.

Council on the Environment, Inc d/b/a GrowNYC, NYC, \$10,000: GrowNYC will operate a youth market farm stand in the South Bronx to provide fresh and affordable farm products to the area, provide job training to youth, and allow regional farmers to access an underserved market through wholesaling.

**The Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC (MARF), NYC, \$10,000: MARF will partner with GrowNYC to leverage outreach strategies and relationships with local organizations serving low-income residents and resident associations to increase participation at the Fort Greene Park Greenmarket and satellite market.**

Corbin Hill Food Project, NYC, \$10,000: Corbin Hill Food Project connects NY farmers with low-income communities in NYC through the Farm Share Program, where individuals and families purchase produce that is aggregated at an upstate facility.

BronxWorks, NYC, \$10,000: Operate the Heights Community Farmers' Market serving the Morris Heights and University Heights communities of the Bronx while also conducting cooking demonstrations, farmers' market tours, health workshops, as well as incorporating farm produce into pantry programs and congregate meal programs at BronxWorks.

Cypress Hills Local Development Cooperation, NYC, \$10,000: The project will continue operation of the Cypress Hills youth market and install permanent lamps to promote safety of the market. Large promotional banners and a sound system will also be purchased to

promote the market and comfort of its attendees. Cooking demonstrations and outreach will also occur.

Harlem State Office Building (125th Street), NYC, \$10,000: The 125th Street Market is entering its fourth year as the flagship market for the Fresh Connect Program. This year the market will be focusing on outreach to additional groups in the community to improve access to farm fresh products and diets of individuals who would otherwise lack sufficient access to these items.

Town of Willsboro, Willsboro, \$10,000: The project will construct a permanent pavilion for the Willsboro farmers' market.

Greater Watertown North Country Chamber of Commerce, Watertown, \$10,000: The project will create two paid part-time positions to assist the market manager, farmers and vendors to enhance the Watertown Farm and Craft Market. Due to the increased redemption of SNAP benefits, an additional EBT machine will be purchased and placed at the opposite end of the market.

Tompkins County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), Ithaca and surrounding communities, \$10,000: The project includes the promotion and distribution of \$5 Healthy Bucks as an incentive for low-income residents to redeem at surrounding rural farmers' markets. Healthy Bucks will be distributed at food pantries, low-income housing centers, DSS, WIC clinics, and other sites where low-income residents gather.

Chenango County CCE, Norwich, \$10,000: The project will create the Bull Thistle Farmers' Market for farmers and crafts people in Chenango County and western Otsego counties, creating a profitable, productive location for vendors to sell products and make connections with customers.

Jamestown Renaissance Corporation, Jamestown, \$1,350: The Downtown Jamestown Farmers' Market will house commercial-grade tents for three key functions of the farmers' markets: 1) a tent for EBT machine and SNAP information; 2) a tent for food preparation and preservation demonstrations; 3) a tent for radio publicity events.

Fredonia Farmers' Market, Fredonia, \$8,000: The "Farm-Fresh Food Assistance Initiative" will operate the Fredonia Farmers' Market while also conducting extensive outreach and educational workshops targeting low-income residents, with the overarching goal to increase use of all nutrition benefits at the market and supporting NYS farms.

Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP), Buffalo, \$10,000: The project will operate the MAP Growing Green Mobile Market (established in 2009) targeting low-income residents of Buffalo. Twelve trained youth employees will operate the mobile market by selling sell food from MAP's Urban Farm and the Oles Farmily Farm in Alden, NY, at 8 farm stand sites.