

Living

Healthy options when at market

“While growing up, my parents never fixed, but now it’s been incorporated into our eating styles, and we like it!” This sentiment by Ivy Everson of Gettysburg is typical. For many families, fruits and vegetables are often desired, but too expensive to purchase regularly.

Fortunately, Everson is part of Healthy Options. It is an initiative of the Adams County Food Policy Council (ACFPC) in cooperation with the Adams County Farmers Market Association (ACFMA), to provide fresh, local produce to families who experience food insecurity. Approximately 40 families participated this past summer with hopes of expanding to 60 in 2013.

Healthy Options began in the summer of 2011. The program targets families who are ineligible for federal aid, but fall below the income level needed to be self-sufficient. When budgets are tight, cuts are usually made from grocery bills, and nutrition suffers. The most expensive foods are often fresh produce while conversely the cheapest foods are often processed, sugary and high in fat.

Participants are referred to Healthy Options by local agencies such as the Adams County Circles Initiative, Casa de la Cultura, and Emergency Services at South Central Community Action Programs.

AT THE FARMERS MARKET *Athena Mandros*



Local farmers donated Community Supported Agriculture shares, which were resold by the Campus Kitchen at Gettysburg College (CKGC). The money accompanied an additional \$3,500 raised through CKGC’s online campaign. Healthy Adams County also received a \$7,300 grant from the Adams County Community Foundation to support this and other food access initiatives.

Each family is given \$40 a month in vouchers to spend at any ACFMA market location. Audrey Hess, a member of the Food Policy Council stated, “We wanted to provide enough money for the families to purchase fruits and vegetables, but we also didn’t want to create a rollercoaster of having and not having when the program isn’t operating.”

ACFPC realized that just providing money for produce wasn’t enough. This past summer, Healthy Options inaugu-

rated a variety of educational activities to supplement the vouchers.

The benefits to farmers and families have been very positive. Throughout summer the ACFMA vendors received steady revenue from the participants. As participant Cara Russo explained, the program has certainly made her family eat healthier. She said, “I think it was really neat for the kids to be able to go to the market and be able to pick different things - especially when they had things that they hadn’t ever tried.”

Demonstrating our local community’s commitment to positive partnerships, Healthy Options has increased access to better nutrition and education to an underserved population while supporting farmers and our local economy.

Emily Constantian also contributed to this article. Emily and Athena are students at Gettysburg College. The Adams County Farmers Market Association is committed to building vibrant farmers’ markets which support small-scale producers, enhance the communities we serve, assist families with access to fresh nutritious food and educate the public about the benefits of eating locally grown products from economically sustainable farms. The Association is a non-profit 501(c)6 organization. Visit us at: acfarmersmarkets.org.