



EBT accepted at local farmers markets.

Having access to fresh, nutritious and affordable food is one of the fundamental elements of building a healthy community.

During the summer of 2017, Farmers Markets in Sherburne County rolled out new software aimed to increase accessibility to healthy foods. More specifically, they began accepting forms of payment such as Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT), debit, credit and Power of Produce (PoP) vouchers. PoP is a program in which children ages 4-12 receive a \$2 wooden token to be spent at the market each week. The intent is for them to purchase fruits and vegetables from their local farmer. These efforts were assisted through funding from Sherburne County SHIP. Rewards are two-fold: to increase access to high quality, nutritious food for families and to provide direct revenue back to local farmers.

The City of Big Lake rolled out new software to accept EBT this past summer, to the utter joy of the vendors who also attest to the excitement met by customers. Judy Wilts, a vendor at the Farmers Market stated, "EBT/SNAP is a good program. The goal is to encourage people to try the Big Lake Farmers Market and see what produce is there. They may have gone to food shelves and thought farmers markets were out of their reach and now they aren't." This new change has also allowed Big Lake to participate in the Market Bucks Program, where SNAP participants can double their purchasing power. Joseph Scott, a customer and vendor at the Big Lake Farmers Market, said accepting EBT "doubled the food, doubled the freshness with the Market Bucks match. Farm fresh food was way better tasting than the grocery store. It lasted twice as long. I will definitely take advantage of it next year!"

Sherburne County SHIP worked for months to establish connections with interested Farmers Markets because of the knowledge that this is a great way to reduce food insecurity, which is paramount in building a healthy community. In 2018, Big Lake Farmers Market is looking forward to increasing the number of transactions and building awareness of the new payments that are accepted. Sherburne County SHIP plans to continue supporting this effort, by expanding EBT acceptance and PoP programs to other nearby farmers markets. They also hope to assist with marketing and promotion efforts so that existing markets are even more successful.

