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DEPUTY MAYOR GIBBS, HEALTH COMMISSIONER FARLEY AND HEALTH AND HOSPITAL CORPORATION PRESIDENT AVILES LAUNCH NEW PROGRAMS TO HELP FAMILIES EAT BETTER AND ACCESS HEALTHY PRODUCE AT FARMERS MARKETS

Fruit & Vegetable Prescription Program Launches in New York City Public Hospitals, Targets Those at Risk of Obesity

Largest City Run Farmers Market SNAP Incentive Program in the Country Increases 32 Percent over Previous Season

Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs, Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas A. Farley and Health and Hospitals Corporation President Alan D. Aviles today announced two new initiatives to expand New Yorkers access to farmers markets' produce and increase healthy eating. The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program, under which a doctor and nutritionist assess the health and nutritional habits of patients and families at risk for obesity and provide "prescriptions" to consume more fruits and vegetables is being brought to New York City for the first time in a pilot program at Lincoln Medical Center in the Bronx and Harlem Hospital Center in Manhattan. The "Come See What's Cookin', Kids" program is also bringing food based nutrition education to kids at four City farmers markets. Additionally, New York City, which has the largest municipal farmers market SNAP incentive program in the nation, is making fruit and vegetables more affordable than ever by expanding the Health Bucks program – which provides \$2 coupons for fresh produce at farmers markets. This year, Health Bucks will make more than \$560,000 worth of fruits and vegetables available to low-income New Yorkers, an increase of 32 percent over the previous season. Deputy Mayor Gibbs made the announcement at HHC's Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx where she was joined by HCC Chief Medical Officer Ross Wilson, HRA Executive Deputy Commissioner Cecile Noel, Food Policy Coordinator Kim Kessler, Laurie Tisch, President of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund and Wholesome Wave Executive Vice President Gus Schumacher.

"Each dollar invested in Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program nourishes public hospital patients and their families, boosts revenue at farmers markets, and supports overall community health," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "Farmers markets support the City's efforts to keep communities fit by providing healthy and affordable dietary options in a localized setting."

"A food environment full of processed foods full of fat, sugar and salt is contributing to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and other chronic diseases," said Health

(more)

Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley. “The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program is a creative approach that, with the inclusion of Health Bucks, will enable at-risk patients to visit any of our 142 Farmers Markets and purchase the fruits and vegetables that will help them stay healthy.”

“Healthy eating habits along with regular checkups and exercise are critical to help people stay physically fit and to control the chronic conditions that affect many of our patients, such as obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes,” said HHC President Aviles. “We welcome FVRx as a tool to achieving healthy eating habits, and to help families gain access to the quality produce available at City farmers markets.”

“Health Bucks are at the heart of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – helping New Yorkers in need supplement their diet with the foods that will benefit them the most,” said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. “With Health Bucks and SNAP nutrition education programs including our healthy eating and cost comparison Cut the Junk initiative, HRA continues its efforts to promote good nutrition habits among more families at the same time it ensures that they will have greater opportunities to get nutritious food with their benefits.”

“These new programs build on the City’s extensive efforts to increase access to and awareness of healthy foods, especially produce,” said Food Policy Coordinator Kim Kessler. “With FVRx and our new farmers market nutrition education program for children, we are sowing the seeds for a healthier future. I want to thank all of the partners that have helped to make this possible.”

“We are proud to support Wholesome Wave’s innovative program to increase access, affordability and knowledge about healthy foods in these high-need communities,” said Laurie Tisch, President of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund. “Through continued collaboration, we will shape a healthier future for communities throughout New York.”

“Our vision for the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program is that it will lead us all to view farmers markets as pharmacies providing access to healthy affordable locally-grown fruits and vegetables,” said Wholesome Wave Executive Vice President Gus Schumacher.

The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) is a nationally-recognized program by Wholesome Wave under which a doctor and nutritionist assess the health and nutritional habits of patients and families at risk for obesity and give patients “prescriptions” to consume more fruits and vegetables. FVRx patients at the two hospitals will then receive Health Bucks, which are coupons from the Human Resources Administration and the Health Department that can be redeemed for fruit and vegetables at all New York City farmers markets.

Patients return to the hospital monthly to meet with their doctor, renew their fruit and vegetable prescriptions, have their weight and body mass index (BMI) evaluated, and receive nutritional counseling leading to self-management goals for healthy eating. Each hospital will attempt to enroll up to 70 patients who will remain in the program for at least four months. Patients in the program receive Health Bucks in the amount of one dollar per day for themselves and their family members, so a patient with a family of four would receive \$28 worth of Health

Bucks per week. This new public-private partnership with HHC has been made possible by a \$250,000 grant from the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund.

“The Bloomberg administration has been a national leader in providing access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. Healthy eating and wellness go hand in hand, so GrowNYC is proud to partner with a number of hospitals in the city to host farmers markets –it’s a natural fit,” said executive director of GrowNYC Marcel Van Ooyen. “Increasing the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables is a help to the city residents’ overall health, and it feeds the local economy by keeping farmland in agricultural production.”

Results from Wholesome Wave 2012 pilot from communities where FVRx programs were launched in California, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington, D.C. indicated that the majority of patients increased fruit and vegetable consumption, made repeated visits to the farmers markets, and continued regular visits to the doctor. New and repeat customers also drove significant sales for the farmers markets. Fifty-three percent of families came to the farmers market eight or more times during the FVRx season. Participants also increased knowledge about their neighborhood farmers markets, where to buy locally grown produce, and the importance of fruits and vegetables in their diet.

This will also be the first year of the Come See What’s Cookin’, Kids program, which provides free and fun food-based nutrition activities for children under 6 and their caregivers at select farmers markets and is funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The Department of Health has been partnering with Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program clinics to help link low income families with small children to this nutrition education resource. Come See What’s Cookin’, Kids builds on the Health Department’s Stellar Farmers Markets program, which provides free cooking and nutrition classes for adults at select farmers’ markets across NYC. The program aims to increase nutrition knowledge and enhance skills in selecting, preparing and storing fresh seasonal produce. The program operates at 21 markets this summer up from 19 last year when the program reached more than 40,000 SNAP-eligible New Yorkers. Attendees of the Stellar Farmers Markets and Come See What’s Cookin’, Kids program receive Health Bucks coupons for participating in the classes.

Lincoln Medical Center and Harlem Hospital Center both serve populations with a high rate of obesity and met several criteria for the FVRx program, including proximity to farmers markets participating in the Health Bucks program. HHC hospitals host numerous farmers markets throughout the City in partnership with Harvest Home and Greenmarket. Shoppers can pay for their fresh fruits and vegetables using EBT cards (food stamps), Health Bucks, Green Checks, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons or WICcoupons.

The following are locations and times of farmers markets at HHC facilities:

Manhattan

- Metropolitan Hospital Center: Market located at 99th street and Third Avenue. Open now to Nov.15. Fridays 8 AM - 4 PM.

- Harlem Hospital: Lenox Avenue between 136 and 137 Streets. Open now to Nov. 15. Fridays 8 AM -4 PM.

Bronx

- Jacobi Medical Center: Market located at 1400 Pelham Parkway, on the new Jacobi Pedestrian Mall directly in front of the hospital. Open now to Thanksgiving. Tuesdays 8 AM - 4 PM.
- North Central Bronx Hospital: Market located at the corner of Mosholu Parkway North and Jerome Avenue. July 10 to Thanksgiving. Wednesdays 8 AM - 6 PM.
- Lincoln Medical Center: Market located on 149th Street, adjacent to the hospital, between Morris and Park Avenue. Open now to Nov. 22. Tuesdays and Fridays 8 AM - 3 PM.

Brooklyn

- Coney Island Hospital: Market located at 2100 Ocean Parkway between Ave. Z and Shore Rd. Open now to November. Fridays 8 AM - 4 PM..

Queens

- Queens Hospital Center: Market located at 164th street and 82nd road, sidewalk pavilion under the east bridge. All year round. Thursdays 8 AM - 4 PM.
- Elmhurst Hospital Center: Market located at 41st Avenue between 80th and 81st streets. Now to Nov. 26. Tuesdays 8 AM - 4 PM.

To find a farmers market near you, visit nyc.gov and search *farmers markets*

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