

**Highlights of research re: barriers to  
fruit/vegetable consumption**  
compiled by Valley Food & Farm, a program of Vital Communities  
for Upper Valley HEAL (12/6/2010)  
[www.vitalcommunities.org](http://www.vitalcommunities.org)

## **Upper Valley Research and Data**

### **1. Healthy Eating by Design at Romano Circle (2005-2006)**

Valley Food & Farm (VF&F) worked on this Robert Wood Johnson-funded pilot project with other community partners to help low-to-moderate income children in West Lebanon NH access healthy foods to combat childhood obesity. Prior to the start of the project, the most frequently cited barriers to preparing meals with fresh veggies were: high cost, inadequate end-of-month budget, not enough time. Others included: kids won't eat veggies, no time to shop every week, no transportation, can't buy fresh vegetables with food stamps, Willing Hands' deliveries are infrequent.

### **2. Valley Food & Farm's Fresh Connections (2008)**

This wellness benefit linked businesses and their employees with local food and agriculture through a variety of workplace activities. The research question was "by providing easy access to locally grown produce and farm services to people at their workplace, can we increase their consumption of produce?" Research was conducted by the Hood Center for Children and Families. VF&F provided interventions at the workplace.

Employees at 6 Upper Valley worksites were invited to complete a pre-intervention assessment. We received 655 responses. To the question: "Is there anything that normally prevents you from eating the amount of fruits or vegetables that you would like to eat?" 48% said yes. The most frequently mentioned barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption were: high cost, not enough time, and limited availability. One unexpected finding was that Fresh Connections sparked a renewed interest in gardening.

### **3. HEAL Family Survey (2010)**

This survey was conducted in April 2010 with parents of K-2 students at the Enfield and Canaan elementary schools. 69 responses were received. People were asked how many servings of fruits, and of vegetables, they served each day. The vast majority served each 1-3x/day. The most frequent answer was 2 fruits and 2 veg/day. In both towns, the most frequently mentioned barrier to serving enough fruits & veg. was "It is too expensive." Canaan residents also frequently cited "low quality in town" (28%). In response to the question: "what types of things in your community would help you serve your family more fruits and vegetables?" 33% of Canaan respondents gave answers that included comments about farmers' markets.

### **4. YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2009) - Mascoma School District**

The YRBS data is self-reported by high school students nationally every 2 years (rather than being based on an independent clinical measurement and consistent guideline).

UVHEAL used some CHAD clinic data regarding BMI (body mass index) from elementary school students to originally generate some sense of the challenges in our region. While the clinic data has some limitations, it is internally consistent, and identified greater issues with overweight/obesity in the Mascoma/Lebanon region than in towns surrounding these municipalities. In the 2007 YRBS, questions also included how many days/week students ate carrots, potatoes, fruit, and green vegetables, but were not included in 2009. (Greg Norman)

[http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/school\\_health/hiv\\_data.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/school_health/hiv_data.htm)

### **5. Enfield Village Market Analysis(2005)**

This study was initiated by the Enfield Village Association's Main Street program (EVA) to provide objective information on the Enfield trade area and its consumers as part of its economic restructuring efforts. The surveys were mailed primarily to the Enfield zip code area (03748), A total of 374 completed surveys were received representing a 31% response rate. From the report recommendations:

Support for a new or expanded chain grocery store was expressed by 75% of survey respondents. Many expressed their desire for new, large store such as a Market Basket, Shaw's, Hannaford's or similar chain. Others desire a

branch of the Hanover/Lebanon Co-op. Of importance to many in the community are selection (i.e. fresh produce, butcher shop, bakery, and health food), quality, and price.

## **6. USDA Your Food Environment Atlas (a Michele Obama initiative)**

An interactive map showing statistics relative to food access, income levels, food security, by county

<http://maps.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/foodenv5.aspx> In Grafton County:

4% households have no car while being > 1 mile from a store.

18% of households have low income and are > 1 mile from store

0.4 grocery stores per 1,000 population

0.6 convenience stores (w/gas) per 1,000 people

2.5 acres of vegetables harvested per 1,000 people

0.1 farmers' markets per 1,000 people

## **National Research And Selected Information Sources**

### **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation:**

"The latest research shows that the environments we live in and the public policies our leaders enact directly impact the foods our children eat and how much activity they get. When schools have healthy foods and beverages in their cafeterias and vending machines, students eat better. When communities have parks and bike trails in their neighborhoods and vigorous physical education programs in their schools, children are more active. When neighborhoods have supermarkets and farmers' markets that sell affordable healthy foods, families eat more nutritiously. But when communities are dominated by fast food, with few places to play, our children eat worse and are less active, and their health suffers. And we all pay a price—in higher health care costs and lost economic productivity."

<http://www.rwjf.org/childhoodobesity/challenge.jsp>

A new report, *Planting the Seeds for Public Health: How the Farm Bill Can Help Farmers to Produce and Distribute Healthy Foods*, released by Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc., shows that federal policies impede farmers' ability to make fruits and vegetables more widely available and affordable. <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/20100803flag.pdf>

"Fixing a World that Fosters Fat"

About the role of the environment

[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/business/22stream.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/business/22stream.html?_r=1)

"Produce by Prescription"

Doctors at three health centers in Massachusetts have begun advising patients to eat "prescription produce" from local farmers' markets, in an effort to fight [obesity](#) in children of low-income families. Now they will give coupons amounting to \$1 a day for each member of a patient's family to promote healthy meals.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/13/business/13veggies.html>

"Family meals, vegetables may keep kids trim"

Children who regularly sit down to family meals and get plenty of vegetables in their diet tend to be thinner than their peers without such eating habits, a new study finds.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE6672T520100708>

"Farmers markets can't reach everyone"

Only one market in Mecklenburg County (SC) accepts SNAP (food stamp) benefits.

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2010/08/02/1596086/farmers-markets-cant-reach-everyone.html>

"Technology still a barrier for food stamp clients hoping to shop at farmer's markets"

[http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100801/GNEWS\\_01/708019947/-1/FOSNEWS](http://www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100801/GNEWS_01/708019947/-1/FOSNEWS)

### **From Foodlinks newsletter, produced by California Emergency Foodlink:**

USDA has announced that it will conduct in Hampden County, MA the first-ever Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP) under SNAP, an incentives-based program to empower low-income Americans to eat more fruits and vegetables. Starting in the fall of 2011, HIP will enroll 7,500 randomly selected SNAP households (out of the 50,000 in the County) to receive incentives. For every dollar participants spend on fruits and vegetables using their SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer cards, 30 cents will be added to their benefit balance . .

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2010/08/0413.xml>

## **Regional Strategies For Increasing Produce Access**

**Farm to Family Coupons -Vermont:** coupons redeemable only for fresh produce at farmers markets. Families enrolled in the Vermont Department of Health's WIC Program are eligible.  
[http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/farm\\_to\\_family](http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/farm_to_family)

**WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program -New Hampshire:** provides coupons to WIC and Senior CSFP (Commodity Supplemental Food Program) participants to purchase fresh produce at participating farmers' markets. <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/WIC/farmersmarket.htm>

### **EBT Access at Farmers Markets -VT:**

Currently 30 VT Farmers' Markets accept EBT/debit cards. View the list of markets at [http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com/info/farmers\\_markets.php](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com/info/farmers_markets.php)

"SNAP/EBT at Your Farmers Market: Seven Steps to Success" – a guide, from the Project for Public Spaces, that explains why and how to set up and support EBT acceptance at your farmers' market.  
<http://www.pps.org/pdf/SNAP%20EBT%20Book.pdf>

### **Farmers' Markets EBT Access – NH:**

"Farmer's Markets Face Financial, Technological Challenge" Discusses how many NH Farmers' Markets don't have a way of accepting EBT cards  
<http://www.wmur.com/money/24362857/detail.html>

Accepting EBT Cards at Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands: a Primer for market Managers and Farmers  
[http://extension.unh.edu/resources/representation/Resource000816\\_Rep852.pdf](http://extension.unh.edu/resources/representation/Resource000816_Rep852.pdf)

New Hampshire – a 2004 pilot program to bring EBT access to farmers' markets included 5 participating markets, including Enfield and Lebanon. Lebanon Farmers Markets is the only market in the state that participates currently.

"Accepting EBT Cards at Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands: a Primer for market Managers and Farmers"  
[http://extension.unh.edu/resources/representation/Resource000816\\_Rep852.pdf](http://extension.unh.edu/resources/representation/Resource000816_Rep852.pdf)

### **Harvest Health Coupon Program – at Farmers' Markets in Vermont:**

"If you receive 3SquaresVT [formerly known as Food Stamps, and know as SNAP in all other states] and you use your EBT card at a farmers' market that accepts EBT, you can double your purchasing power through the use of 'Harvest Health' coupons. At 25 markets across Vermont, when you swipe your EBT card, you will also receive up to \$10 worth of Harvest Health coupons which can be used for any 3SquaresVT allowable food at the market". For more information contact [NOFA-VT](#)." (NH does not currently have a comparable "matching" program.)

### **VT Food Bank – innovative programs:**

Back Pack Program [http://www.vtfoodbank.org/our\\_programs/back\\_pack/](http://www.vtfoodbank.org/our_programs/back_pack/)

Food Bank Farming Network [http://www.vtfoodbank.org/our\\_programs/farming\\_network/](http://www.vtfoodbank.org/our_programs/farming_network/)

Others at [http://www.vtfoodbank.org/our\\_programs/](http://www.vtfoodbank.org/our_programs/)

### **NH Food Bank's innovative programs:**

Backpack program [http://www.nhfoodbank.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6&Itemid=9](http://www.nhfoodbank.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6&Itemid=9)

Mobile Food Pantry [http://www.nhfoodbank.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=8](http://www.nhfoodbank.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=8)

Production Garden

[http://www.nhfoodbank.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=35](http://www.nhfoodbank.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=53&Itemid=35)

### **Willing Hands Fruit and Vegetable Prescription:**

UVHEAL is partnering with Willing Hands, the Upper Valley's food recovery organization, and primary health clinics in Lebanon and Mascoma (NH) to provide prescriptions for free fruits and vegetables to pregnant women and parents of children under age 5 who are in need.