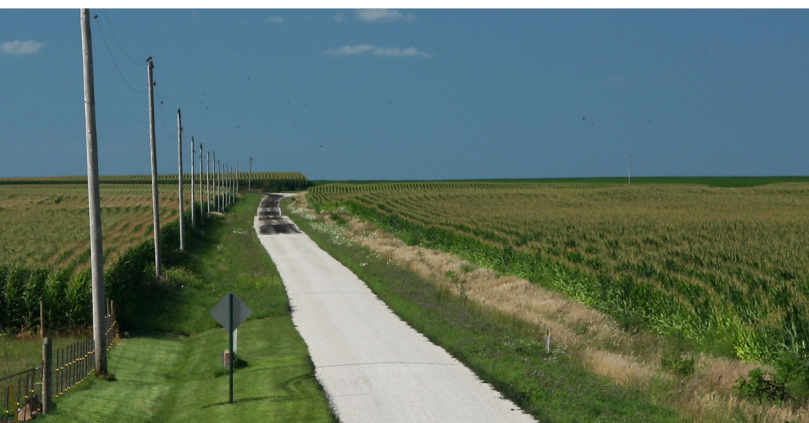


LINK Up Illinois



2011-2015 Report



From the Executive Director

A cultural organization, Experimental Station is often asked why we have taken such a strong interest over the past eight years in expanding affordable access to the foods sold at Illinois farmers markets. It is a good question with a fairly simple answer: food is our most democratic form of cultural expression; every day, we express and create our cultural selves through the food choices we make. We ask in turn, 'How can a culture and society thrive and be healthy when people living in many urban neighborhoods and rural areas throughout the state have access only to foods that we call 'junk'?

Eight years ago, the Experimental Station founded the 61st Street Farmers Market on Chicago's south side, with the aim of bringing fresh and healthy foods to the Woodlawn neighborhood and surrounding area. While we accepted SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, formerly known as 'food stamps', provided in Illinois on the Illinois Link Card), we continued to face a moral dilemma: on the one hand, wanting to offer locally and sustainably grown foods to our market clientele and, on the other, wanting to ensure that our neighbors receiving SNAP benefits could afford them.

The introduction in 2009 of a Double Value Coupon Program that matched SNAP benefits provided the answer. Experimental Station's commitment to hospitality found its expression in our ability to welcome SNAP customers and to provide them with a means to afford the foods the Market offered. SNAP customers responded, increasing their SNAP purchases at the Market by more than 500% in the first year of offering the Double Value Coupon Program.

Realizing the immediate impact of this program, Experimental Station engaged in a strategic partnership with Wholesome Wave Charitable Ventures, the Double Value Coupon Program's creator, to expand the program in Chicago and beyond.

The creation of *LINK Up Illinois* in 2011 was undertaken to provide an effective mechanism for scaling and sustaining a statewide program. By building a network with the support of key program partners, Experimental Station has been able to provide a systematic way to define program standards, share best practices, and collect and assemble data. Such a collective impact approach enables a structured method for collaboration across organizations and sectors—with the goal of creating meaningful, long-term change.

Five years since launching *LINK Up Illinois*, Experimental Station would like to provide our many stakeholders with a cumulative picture of where we have come since 2011—and where we still aim to go. There remains much work to be done. We invite you to be part of the continued effort.



Photo courtesy of Marc Monaghan

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Connie Spreen". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Connie Spreen, PhD

Executive Director
Experimental Station

Overview

LINK Up Illinois is a program of Experimental Station, a 501(c)3 non-profit, undertaken in partnership with Wholesome Wave Charitable Ventures and the Illinois Farmers Market Association.

Experimental Station and its partners seek to increase the affordability and accessibility of fresh and nutritious foods sold at Illinois farmers markets for low-income Illinoisans, rebuilding linkages between local agricultural producers and consumers. LINK Up Illinois was created to combat urban and rural food deserts; ensure the viability of local small and mid-size farms through

increased income; offer lasting health benefits to Illinois' most at risk communities; and provide data and advocate for policy change on a state and federal level.

LINK Up Illinois achieves these aims by providing farmers markets across the state with funding for Double Value Coupon incentive programs for recipients of Illinois Link benefits. LINK Up Illinois also provides participating markets with training and technical assistance to ensure successful implementation of these programs.

Since 2011, LINK Up Illinois has provided Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) funding, training, and technical support to over 80 farmers markets and direct-to-consumer sites throughout Illinois. From 2011-2015, the LINK Up Illinois network, comprised of all of our partner and affiliate markets, collectively reported \$977,703 in SNAP and DVCP purchases. Data produced and collected by LINK Up Illinois partner and affiliate markets is an important contribution to state and national nutrition incentive policy efforts. Working with LINK Up Illinois partner markets and a broad coalition of Illinois health advocates and agencies, Experimental Station seeks to institutionalize Double Value Coupon nutrition incentives at the state level in the coming years.

SNAP/Link-Eligible Foods Available at Farmers Markets

fruits and vegetables
grains, breads, bakery items, cereals
meats, fish, and poultry
dairy products, eggs
seeds and plants for food
value-added foods (eg. preserves, sauces, pickled food, soup)
honey
confections (eg. sweet baked or dairy goods)

In 2009, the Experimental Station piloted Illinois' first Double Value Coupon Program at its own 61st Street Farmers Market.



Photo courtesy of Axel Peterman

Why We Need LINK Up Illinois

Almost 1 in 6 Illinoisans receives SNAP benefits, cutting across all demographics. A startling 48% are children, with working-age women making up 28%, working-age men 16%, and 60 and older 8%.¹ Many low-income Illinoisans only have access to food they can purchase with their Link card.

Farmers markets have sprung up in many urban and rural communities as a low-overhead means of providing fresh and healthy foods in areas with low access to healthy food, acting as both community gathering spaces and as local economic generators. Illinois currently has approximately 400 farmers markets, with more being established each year.

In order for farmers markets to meet the need for accessible food, they must first be equipped with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems. However, even when they can use their SNAP benefits to make purchases, SNAP benefit recipients often cannot afford to do so. While the foods sold at farmers markets are generally fresher and more nutritious than foods sold in supermarkets, these foods often come with a higher price tag that is cost prohibitive for low-income customers.

LINK Up Illinois aims to ensure that SNAP benefit recipients not only have affordable access to the fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods sold at Illinois farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues, but are also incentivized to purchase and consume them. This is ac-

1 "FACT vs. FICTION: USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," USDA Blog

complished by expanding the number of Illinois farmers markets offering EBT systems and Double Value Coupon Programs.

LINK Up Illinois Double Value Coupon Programs make healthy foods sold at farmers markets affordable by doubling the value of SNAP purchases at a farmers market. For each SNAP purchase, shoppers receive matching coupons redeemable at the market for purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables. Combined with targeted outreach efforts, a Double Value Coupon Program dramatically increases spending of SNAP benefits at farmers markets, as well as consumption of fruits and vegetables. In surveys undertaken from 2013-2015, at least 92% of SNAP shoppers reported that the Double Value Coupon Program was important or very important in their decision to shop at the farmers market (and that they would not have otherwise come); 87% of SNAP shoppers reported increased or greatly increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.²

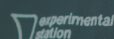
As an added benefit, the increased sales from SNAP and Double Value Coupon purchases end up in the pockets of our local farmers, growing small farms and supporting local economies. The USDA has calculated that \$1 of SNAP spent at a farmers market generates \$1.80 in economic benefit.³ *Since 2011, markets in the LINK Up Illinois network have generated over \$1,759,865 in economic impact.*

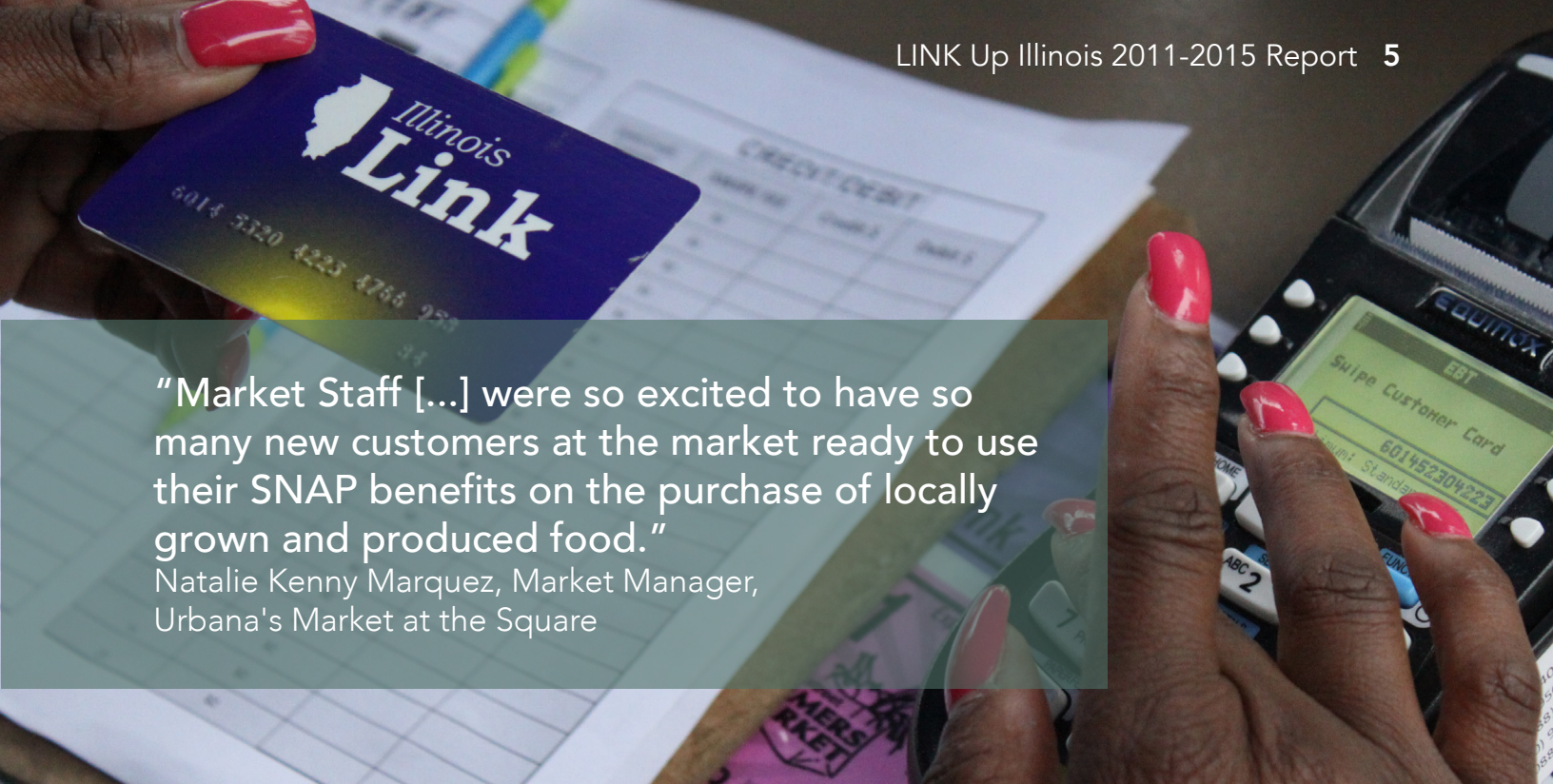
2 61st Street Farmers Market (Experimental Station) annual surveys, 2013-2015

3 USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Profile of SNAP Households (Illinois), March 2015

"To create a farmers market that crosses all social and economic sectors, you have to make its product offerings accessible to everyone in the community which it serves. Access often means reintroducing farmers markets to our most vulnerable populations and creating a space where everyone feels welcome—where farmers and vendors are paid a fair price for their goods, where those foods are affordable for the entire community, and where the community understands how to prepare those foods."

Corey Chatman, LINK Up Illinois Program Manager





"Market Staff [...] were so excited to have so many new customers at the market ready to use their SNAP benefits on the purchase of locally grown and produced food."

Natalie Kenny Marquez, Market Manager,
Urbana's Market at the Square

LINK Up Illinois Goals

Expand Reach: LINK Up Illinois aims to expand the Double Value Coupon Programs that it funds to include additional Illinois markets located in and outside of Chicago and Cook County.

Increase Usage: LINK Up Illinois aims to increase SNAP and WIC purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables at Illinois farmers markets by providing SNAP Double Value Coupon Program nutrition incentives at the point of purchase. LINK Up Illinois aims to increase the number of SNAP recipients who purchase and consume fresh fruits and vegetables sold at Illinois farmers markets.

Increase Knowledge: LINK Up Illinois aims to contribute to the understanding of the effectiveness of nutrition incentives in increasing the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among SNAP clients.

Provide Leadership: LINK Up Illinois aims to build a coalition of advocates to support state funding for nutrition incentive programs.

Our Partners

LINK Up Illinois was launched in 2011 as a program of **Experimental Station**, in partnership with **Wholesome Wave** and the **Illinois Farmers Market Association**.



In 2008, **Experimental Station** established the 61st Street Farmers Market to bring fresh and healthy foods to the underserved Woodlawn neighborhood, located on Chicago's south side. Since then, Experimental Station has worked to ensure that, regardless of economic status, people have access to healthy foods and gain knowledge about how to eat more healthfully. As a result of our efforts, farmers market throughout Illinois now accept SNAP and offer Double Value Coupon Programs to

incentivize their SNAP recipients to purchase and consume fresh and healthy foods.

As the lead partner for LINK Up Illinois, Experimental Station provides fundraising, program development, program management, materials design, outreach, market identification/selection, training and technical assistance for partner markets, grant administration, data collection, reporting, financial oversight, and statewide advocacy.



In 2009, the Experimental Station embarked on a long-standing strategic partnership with **Wholesome Wave**, the recognized leader in the nation in nutrition incentive implementation, evaluation, and advocacy. Wholesome Wave's National Nutrition Incentive Network now draws upon the experience and collected data of 92 member organizations in 37 states, representing more than 550 direct-to-consumer sites. In addition to policy development and advocacy, Wholesome Wave supports LINK Up Illinois through fundraising assistance, technical support, data collection support, evaluation capacities, a DVCP learning community, and network building.



The **Illinois Farmers Market Association (IFMA)** was founded in 2012 to provide educational support for farmers market organizers, farmers, vendors, and other community food and nutrition organizations. The Illinois Farmers Market Association promotes LINK Up Illinois to Illinois farmers markets and other direct-to-consumer venues through email communications, conference calls, and webinars and provides advocacy for the program at the state level. IFMA workshops, webinars, conferences, and farmers market forums also provide important opportunities for Experimental Station to offer EBT and DVCP trainings to the Illinois farmers market community.

"Many of our seniors really love the double value coupons, and use them to fill up their freezers with enough greens for the whole winter."
 Laura Erickson, Market Coordinator, Windy City Harvest, Washington Park, Chicago

Expanding Impact: Past to Present

Since the Experimental Station's 61st Street Farmers Market introduced the Double Value Coupon Program in Illinois in 2009, coupled with strong outreach efforts, the Market has continued to lead Illinois farmers markets in combined SNAP and Double Value Coupon purchases. A model for other markets, the 61st Street Farmers Market has been a training ground for developing Experimental Station's expertise in farmers market community outreach, systems, technology, and data collection. With experience gained at the 61st Street Farmers Market, Experimental Station has been able to assist farmers markets throughout Illinois to develop and implement successful EBT and Double Value Coupon Programs.

Supported by USDA FMPP (Farmers Market Promotion Program) funding, in 2010 the Experimental Station provided free EBT consulting to over 30 farmers markets throughout Illinois, and has continued to share its EBT expertise through workshops, Illinois Farmers Market Association farmers' forums, and other outreach initiatives.


Since 2010, Experimental Station has also provided EBT service and administration for the City of Chicago-run farmers markets. Concurrently, Experimental Station implemented a Double Value Coupon Program match of \$10 and \$25 per SNAP cardholder per market at those markets, funded through private foundation support and, in 2014 and 2015, from City and corporate monies. Between 2010 and 2015, the Experimental Station's City EBT program grew from 5 to 22 City-run markets.

In partnership with the Office of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Simon and the Illinois Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services, in 2012 Experimental Station and Illinois Farmers Market Association helped to implement Illinois' Wireless EBT Technology Grant Program, enabling 29 additional markets to launch EBT/SNAP programs.

Since 2011, Experimental Station's LINK Up Illinois program has partnered with over 80 Illinois farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues offering EBT programs (including over half of the 138 Illinois farmers markets authorized to accept SNAP). LINK Up Illinois partner markets carry out Double Value Coupon Programs, provide outreach to SNAP clients, collect data, and often provided nutrition and other food education. In addition, LINK Up Illinois "affiliate markets" offer Double Value Coupon Programs funded by non-LINK Up Illinois sources and contribute their SNAP and Double Value Coupon Program data to the data pool. The Illinois Farmers Market Association's promotion of EBT expansion and the Double Value Coupon Program through their farmers market network has contributed to LINK Up Illinois' rapid growth and success.

LINK Up Illinois contributes to a national data collection effort coordinated by Wholesome Wave aimed at increasing federally funded nutrition incentives. Wholesome Wave provides and maintains a web portal and template for data collection, such that all LINK Up Illinois partner and affiliate markets collect and report the same data. In this way, LINK Up Illinois is able to consolidate statewide market data, and include this data in Wholesome Wave's national reporting.

In 2015, Experimental Station was awarded a USDA Farmers Market SNAP Support Grant to provide free EBT consulting and EBT/SNAP implementation grants to up to 50 Illinois farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues in 2016 and 2017. In addition, USDA funds will provide for statewide outreach to make SNAP recipients aware that farmers markets will accept their SNAP benefits.



From 2011-2015 LINK Up Illinois-funded markets generated \$589,458 in SNAP sales and \$388,245 in Double Value Coupons, totaling \$977,703 in combined SNAP and Double Value Coupon sales.

Participating Markets

LINK Up Illinois' over 80 farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues are located as far north as Woodstock and as far south as tiny Pulaski on Illinois' southernmost tip. Partners range from very large markets, like Urbana's Market at the Square, to mobile markets, such as the Fresh Moves bus that brings fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved neighborhoods on Chicago's south and west sides.

Each year, LINK Up Illinois reviews applications from Illinois farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues. Selected markets must be authorized to accept SNAP and have the capacity to successfully manage an EBT and a Double Value Coupon Program, which includes carrying out required data reporting.

2011-2015 LINK Up Illinois Partner Markets

61st Street Farmers Market, Chicago
Andersonville Farmers Market, Chicago
Aurora Farmers Markets (3 sites), Aurora
Austin Town Hall Farmers Market, Chicago
Back of the Yards Community Market at The Plant, Chicago
Beverly Farmers Market, Chicago
Bridgeport Farmers Market, Chicago
Bronzeville Community Market, Chicago
Bronzeville Farmers Market, Chicago
Columbus Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Covenant Bank/North Lawndale Farmers Market, Chicago
Daley Plaza Farmers Market, Chicago
Devon Community Market, Chicago
Division Street Farmers Market, Chicago
Downtown Bloomington Farmers Market, Bloomington
East Side Health District F.R.E.S.H. Farmers Market, East St. Louis
El Conuco-Humboldt Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Englewood-Anchor House Farmers Market, Chicago
Federal Plaza Farmers Market, Chicago
Ford City Mall Farmers Market, Chicago
Garfield Park Conservatory, Chicago
Garfield Park Community Council Farmers Market, Chicago
Growing Power's Fresh Moves Mobile Markets (12 sites), Chicago
Glenview Farmers Market, Glenview
Glenwood Sunday Market, Chicago
Green City/Fulton, Chicago
Green City Market, Chicago
Growing Home's Wood Street Urban Farm, Chicago
Healing Temple Church Farmers Market, Chicago
Healthy Food Hub, Chicago
Hyde Park Farmers Market, Chicago

Illinois Products Farmers Market, Springfield
IMAN Fresh Beats & Eats Farmers Market, Chicago
Independence Park Farmers Market, Chicago
La Follette Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Lincoln Park H.S. Farmers Market, Chicago
Lincoln Square Farmers Market, Chicago
Logan Square Farmers Market, Chicago
Loyola Farmers Market, Chicago
Mt. Ebenezer Baptist Church, Chicago
Near West Side Farmers Market, Chicago
North Center Farmers Market, Chicago
Oak Park Farmers Market, Oak Park
Old Capitol Farmers Market, Springfield
Old General Store Farmers Market, Pulaski
Pekin Main Street Market, Pekin
Peoria Riverfront Farmers Market, Peoria
Perry Avenue Farmers Market, Chicago
Pilsen Community Market, Chicago
Pilsen Night Market, Chicago
Printers Row Farmers Market, Chicago
Pullman Farmers Market, Chicago
Roseland Community Market, Chicago
Seaway Bank Farmers Market, Chicago
South Shore Farmers Market, Chicago
Trinity UCC Farmers Market, Chicago
Urbana's Market at the Square, Urbana
Weiss Uptown Farmers Market, Chicago
West Humboldt Park, Chicago
Wicker Park Farmers Market, Chicago
Willis Tower Farmers Market, Chicago
Windy City Harvest Farm (3 locations), Chicago and North Chicago
Woodstock Farmers Market, Woodstock
Elgin Harvest Market (Affiliate), Elgin
Glenview Farmers Market (Affiliate), Glenview
Northbrook Farmers Market (Affiliate), Northbrook

LINK Up Illinois Funders

LINK Up Illinois has been supported by the following foundations, corporations and municipalities since 2011:

Aetna Foundation
Anonymous Foundation
Bank of America
The Chicago Community Foundation
The Chicago Community Trust
Chipotle Mexican Grill
The City of Chicago
Fresh Taste
Greer Foundation
Harmony WellCare
J.R. Albert Foundation
The Lumpkin Family Foundation
The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust
United States Department of Agriculture
University of Chicago Medicine
Walter S. Mander Foundation
Wholesome Wave

"The double value program at Plant Chicago's farmers market increased my access to nutritional food choices that were produced in my area while helping me develop a personal connection to the farmers growing that food."
 SNAP shopper, Back of the Yards FM at the Plant, Chicago



Since 2011, LINK Up Illinois has **funded, trained, and provided technical support to over 80 farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues**, supporting 55 market sites in 2015 alone.

About Experimental Station

Experimental Station has been working since 2006 to build independent cultural infrastructure on the south side of Chicago, fostering a dynamic ecology of innovative educational and cultural programs, small business enterprises, and community initiatives. Experimental Station has built its own programming to address a variety of identified local needs and has nurtured, hosted, and sponsored numerous other initiatives.

In addition to LINK Up Illinois, Experimental Station currently operates:

Blackstone Bicycle Works

Blackstone Bicycle Works is a bustling community bike shop that each year serves almost 200 boys and girls from Chicago's south side—teaching them mechanical skills, job skills, business literacy and how to become responsible community members. Youths also receive after-school tutoring, mentoring, internships and externships, college and career advising, and scholarships.

61st Street Farmers Market

The 61st Street Farmers Market brings fresh, organic, and sustainably raised foods from over 25 regional vendors and producers to the Woodlawn neighborhood on Chicago's south side. Our Garden-to-Plate education program brings a focused nutrition and gardening curriculum to over 300 elementary school students each year.

City EBT

The Experimental Station provides EBT/LINK service to the City of Chicago farmers markets, enabling SNAP recipients to purchase foods at City of Chicago farmers markets.

Arts & Cultural Events

Throughout the year the Experimental Station hosts a variety of artistic and cultural events, including theatrical performances, art exhibitions, workshops, public conversations and lectures.

Small Business Incubation

The Experimental Station hosts and supports the diverse work of individuals, organizations and small businesses by providing discounted long-term retail and rental space, as well as fiscal sponsorship support.



Connie Spreen, PhD
Executive Director

Connie provides strategic planning, fundraising, financial oversight, and managerial supervision for LINK Up Illinois and other Experimental Station programs and operations.



Corey Chatman
LINK Up Illinois Program Manager

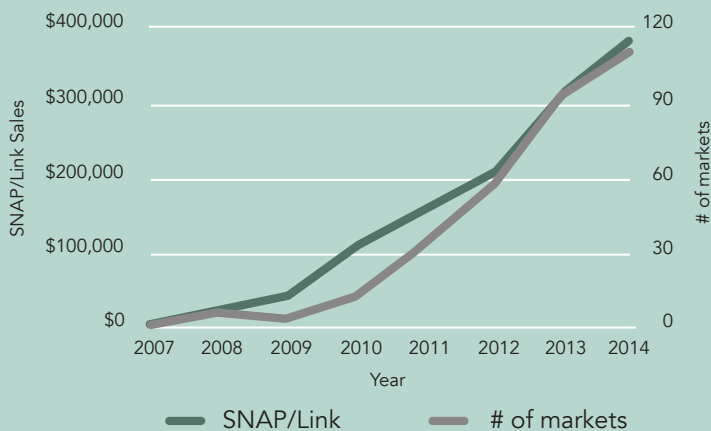
Corey provides outreach to partner markets, market training and technical support, grant management, and program data collection and reporting.

Results

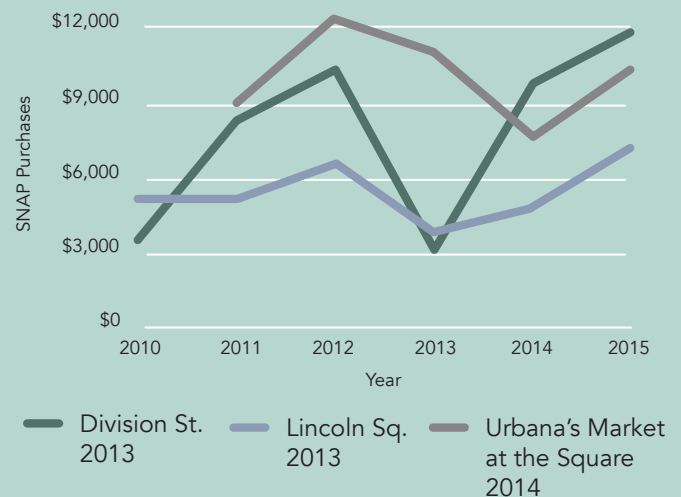
LINK Up Illinois partner markets recorded **8,258 SNAP transactions across our network** in 2015, for a total of more than **38,601 SNAP transactions since 2011**.

In 2013, **87% of SNAP customers surveyed** at the Experimental Station's 61st Street Farmers Market reported **increased or greatly increased consumption of fruits and vegetables as a result of shopping at the Market**, while in 2015 97.8% of SNAP customers surveyed stated that the Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) incentive was important in their decision to shop at the market and **59% said DVCP was extremely important and would not have shopped at the market otherwise**.

Growth of SNAP/Link Sales and Markets across IL

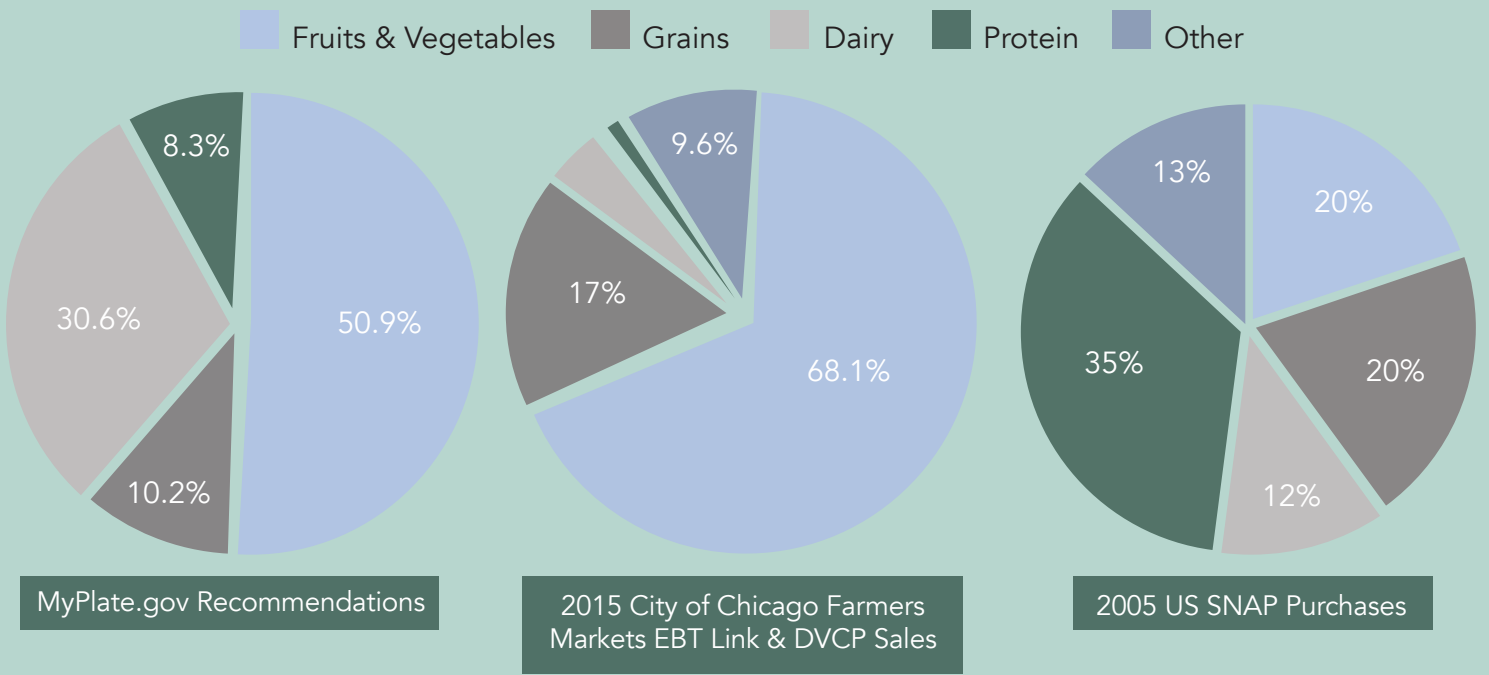


Decline in SNAP Purchases in Years Without DVCP Funding

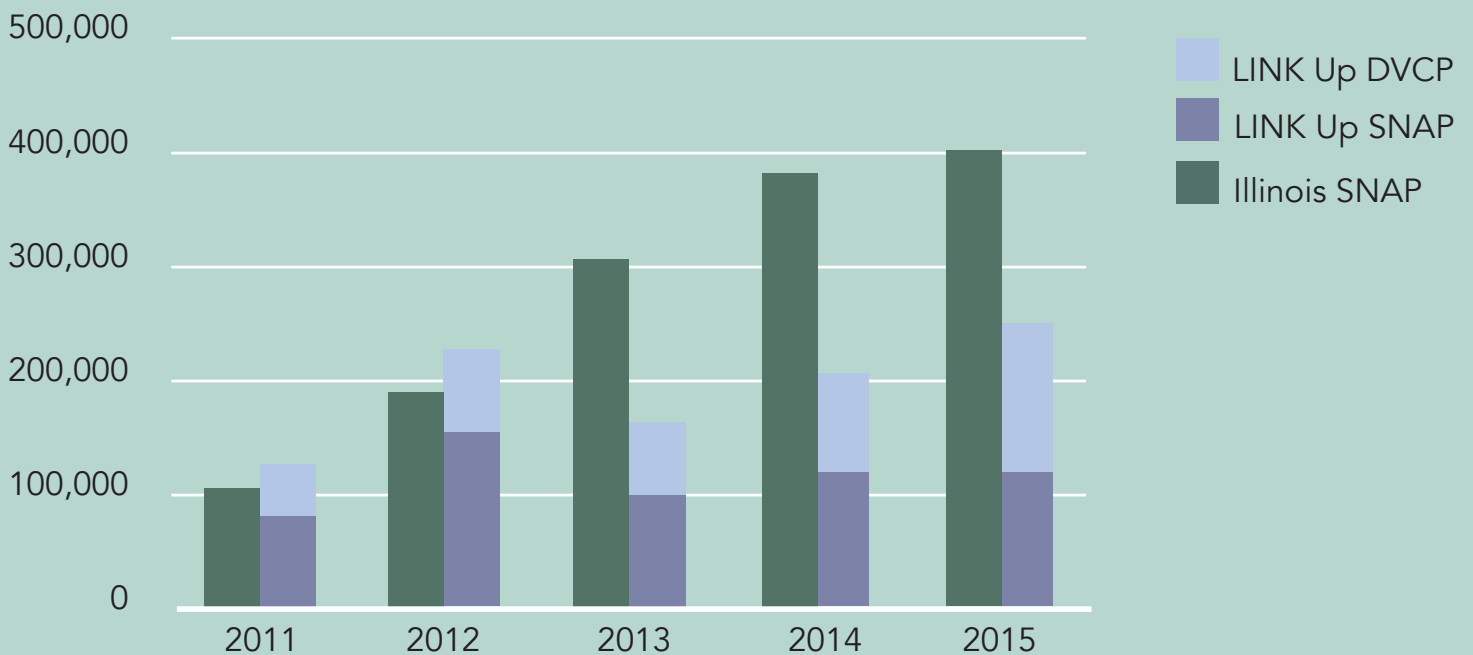


Since 2010, Experimental Station has **provided SNAP consulting** to nearly all of the **138 Illinois farmers market organizations** authorized to accept SNAP.

In 2015, LINK Up Illinois partner markets reporting to Wholesome Wave comprised **12.32% of the total SNAP and Double Value Coupon purchases** by Wholesome Wave partners throughout the U.S.



SNAP purchases at Farmers Markets and Direct Marketing Farmers; Illinois vs LINK Up Network



To date, Experimental Station has **raised and granted over \$400,000 to Illinois markets** for their SNAP incentive programs. The economic impact generated by these SNAP incentive programs is equal to four times the initial investment, totalling **\$1,759,865.40**.

Statewide Network Strategy

"Whether or not access to healthy food is a human right is a debatable issue. What is not debatable is the simple fact that it is not possible for our nation's economy, society, and culture to be healthy if a large percentage of our population is not."

Connie Spreen, Executive Director, Experimental Station

As Illinois' lead organization for expanding the use of EBT and SNAP Double Value Coupons at farmers markets, Experimental Station plays a central role in building a broad network that serves all areas of the state.

In order to seek long-term sources of funding for LINK Up Illinois, in the past two years, Experimental Station developed a statewide strategy that includes establishing partnerships with health sector agencies and associations, health providers, and non-profit organizations concerned about the ill health of our most vulnerable populations. Among these natural partners in the effort to ensure affordable access to fresh and healthy foods are:

- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- American Stroke Association
- Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC) at Ann and Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago
- Harmony WellCare
- Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity
- Illinois Public Health Institute
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance
- Illinois Farmers Market Association
- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
- University of Chicago Medicine

With Experimental Station leadership, since 2013 these and other organizations have formed a coalition of advocates to support state funding of Double Value Coupon nutrition incentives in Illinois.

Working with coalition advocates, in 2015 State Representative Mike Tryon (R, 66th District) introduced legislation (IL HB 6027) to address the increasing cost of the growing Medicaid population to our state. Co-sponsored by three additional state representatives, the bill proposes the creation of a state fund for nutrition incentives.



"Ensuring that all Chicago residents have access to fresh, healthy foods today is critical to creating a stronger Chicago for tomorrow. [...] The Double Value Coupon Program is one of the many ways that Chicago is working to provide more opportunities for our residents to live a healthier lifestyle."

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, City of Chicago

A Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund for Illinois

As currently written, the legislation aims to provide \$1 million per year in state funding for nutrition incentives, program outreach, and administration. If passed, the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund legislation will create affordable access to fresh fruits and vegetables sold at Illinois farmers markets and other direct-to-consumer venues for SNAP and WIC program recipients. This has the potential to reach 2 million Illinois SNAP users and 260,000 WIC recipients.

The Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund also has the potential to be matched by the USDA's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program. The USDA FINI program will match \$100 million in state and private sources dollar-for-dollar in fiscal years 2015-2019, potentially doubling the health and economic benefits brought by the Healthy Local Food Incentives Fund to Illinois' SNAP recipients, farmers and rural economies.



Why it is needed

Limited access to affordable, healthy food contributes to obesity and diabetes. These conditions are especially prevalent among low-income Illinoisans and thus costly to the State of Illinois.

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, obesity rates in Illinois are at epidemic levels. The Illinois Department of Public Health reported in 2010 that 62% of adults in Illinois are overweight or obese, with an obesity rate of over 29%. Rates of obesity have been found to be highest in low-income communities (particularly those that are African-American and Hispanic) where healthy food options are limited or unavailable. In Chicago's Hispanic Humboldt Park, for instance, the obesity and overweight rate of children has risen to between 47-53%.¹

Rates of diabetes among Illinoisans with incomes below \$15,000 are three times higher than those who have an income higher than \$50,000.² The American Diabetes Association has estimated the medical cost of diabetes in Illinois in 2014 to have been \$8.98 billion, which includes \$6.6 billion in di-

rect medical costs and \$2.4 billion in indirect costs, such as disability, work loss, and premature death.

Expansion of Medicaid eligibility under the Affordable Care Act will create a 97.5% overlap between SNAP and Medicaid eligibility in Illinois. This is to say that, as Medicaid expansion occurs, Illinois' SNAP population and our Medicaid population will essentially be the same.

Since Medicaid expansion began in 2014, new Medicaid enrollments have more than doubled state projections,³ and this new population of Medicaid enrollees is also sicker, with high incidences of obesity, diabetes, and related co-morbidities.

For a state that has opted for Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act, these statistics present both fiscal and population health threats. A healthier SNAP and WIC population means improved lives and reduced Medicaid costs.

1 Chicago Department of Public Health, 2011

2 "The Burden of Diabetes in Illinois," Illinois Department of Public Health (2012)

3 "Cook County Releases 1st Snapshot of New Medicaid Patients," Chicago Tribune, June 2, 2014; "Illinois Medicaid Enrollment Jumps Under Obamacare," Crain's Chicago Business, July 20, 2015.

Healthy Food Environments

The path to health, at once for Illinois' population and for our state's budget, begins with ensuring access to healthy food.

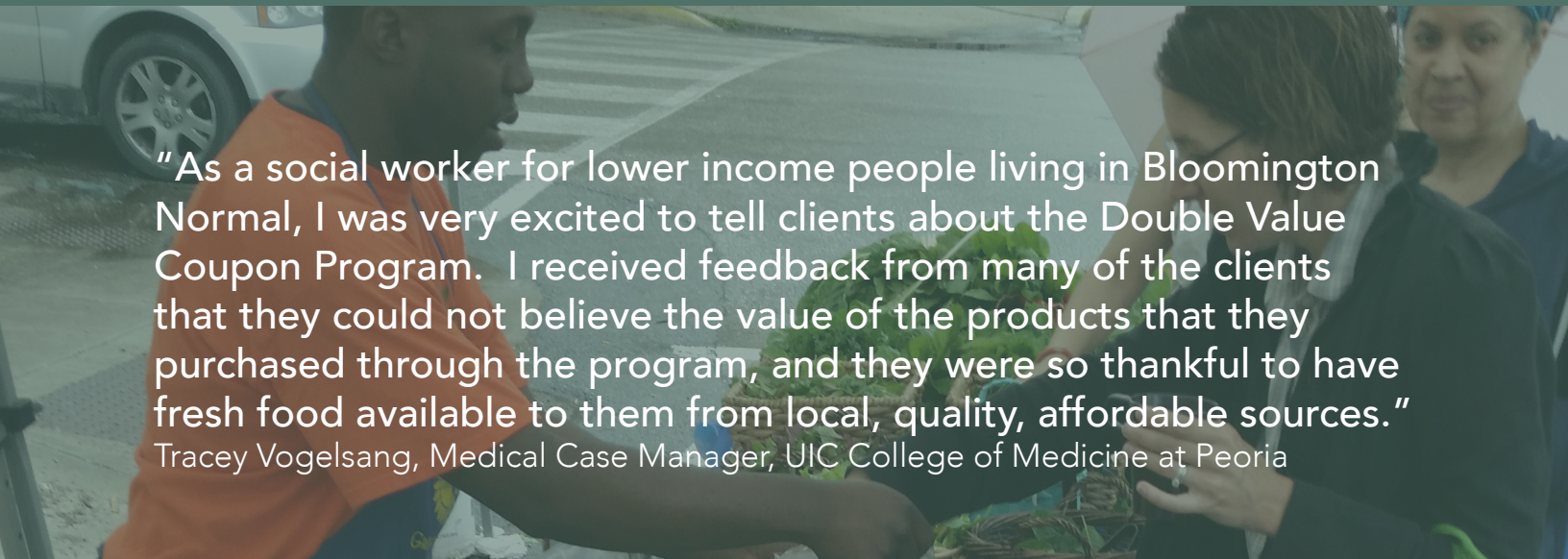
Illinois has approximately 400 farmers markets, with more established each year. 138 of these have the capacity to accept SNAP. So far, the Double Value Coupon Program has operated at more than 80 farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues statewide.

Many farmers markets that accept SNAP and offer Double Value Coupon Programs often also offer educational opportunities for their customers, including chef demonstrations, tastings, recipes, nutrition information, gardening consulting, and even cooking classes.

Data has demonstrated that, when able to shop in a healthy food environment, SNAP recipients purchase more healthy foods. Each year, between 50-65% of SNAP and Double Value Coupon benefits spent at farmers markets are spent on fresh fruits and vegetables, with another 32-47% spent on staples such as meats, cheese, eggs, bread, and preserved produce (with 3% or less spent on sweet bakery, dairy, and confections). 85% of SNAP customers surveyed at the Experimental Station's 61st Street Farmers Market have reported purchasing and consuming more and different types of fruits and vegetables as a result of the market's Double Value Coupon Program, while 87% of SNAP customers reported increased or greatly increased consumption of fruits and vegetables as a result of shopping at the farmers market.

Eat Up!

Piloted at the Experimental Station's 61st Street Farmers Market in 2014, Eat Up! rewards SNAP clients with \$5 in 'LINK Bucks' each day they come to a participating market to get their health statistics checked (blood pressure, BMI, heart rate, smoker status, zip code, year of birth). Eat Up! anonymously tracks the customer health statistics on an app and provides an opportunity to educate SNAP clients about their health and the health benefits of consuming fruits and vegetables sold at the farmers market. The initiative expanded in 2015 to six markets in Chicago and East St. Louis, Illinois, collecting and tracking health metrics of almost 300 unique participating SNAP customers. Over time, Experimental Station anticipates that participating SNAP customers will see improvement in health outcomes as a result of educating themselves about their health and consuming foods from farmers markets.



"As a social worker for lower income people living in Bloomington Normal, I was very excited to tell clients about the Double Value Coupon Program. I received feedback from many of the clients that they could not believe the value of the products that they purchased through the program, and they were so thankful to have fresh food available to them from local, quality, affordable sources."

Tracey Vogelsang, Medical Case Manager, UIC College of Medicine at Peoria



"In December of last year, I decided I would stop working to care for my newborn daughter full-time. Unfortunately, a month later I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hodgkin's Disease. [...] I found myself going from self-sufficient to dependent in a flash. At the insistence of my family, I applied for Medicaid, WIC, and finally Link. [...] The Experimental Station Link program continues to be a blessing for me and my 11-month old daughter. In addition to being able to finally afford the food I need to help me heal, I have also been able to save money I would normally spend on commercially prepared baby food. [...] The program has enabled me to have a well-rounded diet crucial for my healing program and is helping my daughter develop healthy eating habits. [...] Thank you in advance for keeping this program fully funded."
Rosetta McPherson, mother and SNAP recipient

Healthy Local Economies

Double Value Coupon Programs are a clear win for Illinois small farmers.

A strong argument for supporting Double Value Coupon Programs is the documented impact that SNAP and Double Value Coupon Programs have on farmer sales. Combined SNAP, WIC, and Double Value Coupon sales account for 10-25% of farmer and producer revenues at markets where the Double Value Coupon Program operates.

“We know that offering incentives to purchase healthy products at farmers markets not only helps SNAP recipients consume a healthier diet; it also boosts the local farm economy. These new partnerships with health care organizations, philanthropies and others are a clear “win-win” for SNAP customers, local farmers and the entire community.”

Kevin Concannon, USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

By driving more SNAP and nutrition incentive dollars into the pockets of farmers and food producers that sell their products at Illinois farmers markets, we can help our farmers grow their businesses, incentivize additional Illinois farmers to grow and sell fruits and vegetables, and stimulate the health of Illinois’ rural economies. As advocates of Double Value Coupon Programs work to build ‘downstate’ (i.e. outside of Chicago) support for state-funded nutrition incentives, we aim to ensure that LINK Up Illinois serves markets, farmers and rural economies throughout Illinois.

In 2015, the LINK Up Illinois network recorded \$124,335 in SNAP and \$127,517 in DVCP sales. That’s \$251,852 spent on locally grown farm fresh foods. The USDA has determined that every \$1 of SNAP money spent creates \$1.80 for local economies. By this measure, the LINK Up Illinois program benefited our local economies by \$453,333.60 in 2015, or \$1,759,865 total since the program started in 2011!



“Without grants and the help of LINK Up Illinois, we wouldn’t have been able to accept LINK. We’d have a lot of customers ask if we could take their benefits card, and we’d have to turn them down because our machines didn’t have that capability.”

Bonnie Dotson, Dotson’s Farm

LINK Up Illinois 2016-17 Plans and Goals

While much has been accomplished since the Experimental Station piloted Illinois' first Double Value Coupon Program in 2009, too many families in Illinois still lack access to fresh, healthy foods. The Experimental Station has developed plans and set ambitious targets for 2016 and 2017 to continue moving forward:

EBT EXPANSION

In 2015, Experimental Station was awarded a \$250,000 USDA Farmers Market SNAP Support Grant to further EBT expansion by assisting up to 50 farmers markets per year in 2016 and 2017 to overcome the financial obstacles to implementing EBT programs (\$150,000 of the total grant award). This funding lays the groundwork for expanding LINK Up Illinois' Double Value incentive programs to new markets in 2016, 2017, and thereafter.

SNAP OUTREACH

In partnership with the Illinois Farmers Market Association, Experimental Station will undertake farmers market SNAP marketing, providing posters and brochures to SNAP clients and Illinois Department of Human Services offices which identify locations of farmers markets accepting SNAP. To further support farmers markets as they develop their SNAP/EBT programs, the Illinois Farmers Market Association will create and provide an on-line EBT learning community.

In partnership with CBS Broadcasting Community Partnership Division, the Experimental Station will create and diffuse a television ad, to run 100 times on CBS-TV, that will promote SNAP use at farmers markets. Targeted at a low-income audience, the ad will be diffused to over 600,000 SNAP households in the northeastern quarter of Illinois, where 62% of Illinois' SNAP households are concentrated.

DOUBLE VALUE COUPON PROGRAM EXPANSION

LINK Up Illinois aims to provide funds, training, and technical support to 50-55 farmers markets and direct-to-consumer venues in 2016, and 55-60 in 2017.

LINK Up Illinois will target markets outside of Chicago for expansion, seeking to bring the Double Value Coupon Program to Illinois' small towns and more rural areas.

DOUBLE VALUE COUPON PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

LINK Up Illinois will work with partner markets to gather statewide data that tell the full story of Illinois' demand for SNAP Double Value Coupon nutrition incentives.

Having assembled a diverse group of public and private funding partners, Experimental Station applied for USDA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) funding in 2015. With FINI funds we aim to strengthen the LINK Up Illinois statewide network and program awareness in 2016 and 2017.

Partnering with health, hunger, and farmers markets advocates, Experimental Station will work to bring state funding to Illinois nutrition incentive programs. State funding could match USDA FINI funds and have a dramatic impact on the health of Illinois' SNAP recipients and rural economies.

In partnership with CBS Broadcasting Community Partnership Division, LINK Up Illinois produced a 30-second television advertisement targeted at low-income viewers that ran throughout the Chicago area over 100 times in July, 2012. The ad triggered 300%-400% increases in purchases of healthy foods.

“Most of our LINK customers have told us at least once if not many many times how important the [Double Value Coupon] program is to them and their family. How it allows them to purchase good food, and how if we didn’t have the match they wouldn’t be able to shop at the market.”

Jessica Rinks, Market Manager, Oak Park Market

“This year a stay-at-home dad that had lost his job stretched his dollar by coming to the market each week and taking advantage of the double value program. Despite his budget, he fed his family healthy meals and they rarely ate processed foods.”

Delia Nila Basile, Market Coordinator, City of Aurora (2012)

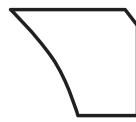
“At Homegrown Bronzeville, our LINK sales increased by 600% and DVCP redemption increased by 40% from 2011 to 2012. Similarly, at our North Chicago farm stand, our LINK sales increased by 25% and DVCP redemption by 480%.”

Laura Erickson, Market Coordinator, Green Youth Farm, Chicago Botanic Garden

“[P]arents [...] bring their kids and say that their kids like to help pick out the fruits/vegetables and then tend to eat them better at home. We also have parents who try to buy as many fresh, local things as possible so they can cook healthy things for their family, and this program allows them to do so.”

Golda E. Ewalt, MS, RD, LDN, Market Manager, Peoria River Front Market





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