

# NEAFCS Award Application: Food Safety Award

## Introduction

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Local food markets are springing up across the country. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates over **1,000,000** people visit a Farmers' Market weekly! More than **20,000** farmers use Farmers' Markets to sell to consumers. This trend helps build new opportunities for producers, adds to local economies and provides nutritious food options for a community.

Farmers' Markets also bring challenges to the average consumer. Used to shopping in retail grocery stores, many may be unaware of specific food safety and storage issues related to using a Farmers' Market. Teaching others about specific issues relating to the Farmers' Market was identified as a high priority as a part of a District Extension Review in 2006. Taking the lead on program development for the district and state, Educators Henneman and Peterson researched educational materials available to educators through the Internet and discovered that a limited number of options for teaching consumers about utilizing farmers' markets were available. As a result, **The Garden Grocery: Food Safety & Selection at the Farmers' Market** PowerPoint and fact sheet were developed by University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension. Program objectives include:

1. Educating participants about the benefits of eating locally produced foods;
2. Food safety issues regarding proper care and storage of fresh produce;
3. Health benefits of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption.

## **TARGET AUDIENCE**

The **Garden Grocery** has a broad group of participants including, but not limited to: Farmers' market attendees and vendors; Nutrition Education Program (NEP or EFNEP) participants; food distribution sites and Food Bank locations; Head Start parent education classes; WIC program nutrition education classes; Senior Center sites; wellness programs; Extension Homemaker Groups; Nutrition and Health Professionals; Fruit and Vegetable Coalitions, consumer groups and 4-H entrepreneurs. It is important to note that due to the broad national marketing campaign for the **Garden Grocery**, this is a national participant base, not just limited to people in Nebraska. Many of the programs identified were specific for immigrant and low income classes.

## **Program description**

### **PROGRAM CONTENT**

**The Garden Grocery: Food Safety & Selection at the Farmers' Market** program and educational materials were developed by UNL Extension to promote awareness and utilization of the foods available at Farmers' Markets. The PowerPoint includes colorful photos of fresh fruits and vegetables to help illustrate the importance of a bright and healthy diet and an overview of the properties of anti-oxidants. Participants also learn about the proper way to handle fresh produce during the selection and storage process to "bag more food for the buck" from the vendors at the Farmers' Market.

## **DELIVERY METHOD**

The delivery method of the **Garden Grocery** PowerPoint and supplemental educational materials are Internet based as a downloadable resource or viewable slide show at: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/farmar.shtml>. Educators report several innovative uses with this curriculum package to deliver them to participants, including handouts at Farmers' Markets, flip chart facts, inserts with food voucher distributions, newspaper and e-newsletter articles; programs and as handouts at various related events. They also are being included as part of a 4-H entrepreneurship project.

## **MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Program materials included a Power Point Program and supplemental handout materials in both English and Spanish, focusing on food selection and safety issues regarding the foods typically sold at Farmers' Markets, emphasizing the nutritional benefits of phyto-chemicals and nutrient rich foods, as well as offering ways to incorporate more fruits and vegetables in the diet, as recommended through the MyPyramid and the More Matters health campaigns.

## **Program impact**

## **EVALUATION METHODS**

Educators and health care professionals were given an option when downloading the program to complete a usage survey and evaluation tool. Statistics for the first 2-1/2 months the materials were on the Web indicated they were very helpful in promoting local foods.

## **RESULTS and IMPACT**

Analysis shows **2,830** educators downloaded the program and handout materials or viewed the program online. Of these, **76** individuals completed an evaluation form; **99%** of respondents responded the materials were helpful to them. Comments included: (1) "They are helpful because we do market cooking and it reminded me of topics that are useful for the people I work with," (2) "I am doing a class for immigrants at our Farmer's Market and I appreciate the storage tips and the good advice on foods stored in plastic bags," (3) "Very thorough, I liked the tips suggestions for people unfamiliar with going to the Farmer's Market. Our participants learned a lot from this informative presentation and colorful pictures."

Ninety-two percent of those surveyed estimated they could reach anywhere from **20** to **145,000** people in future audiences through local Farmers' Markets, health and wellness programs, low-income educational programs, senior center sites, and the general public. The **Garden Grocery** is a natural companion piece to states that provide food coupon vouchers to qualified low-income families and seniors and the centers that service them.

Using a web site resource enables educators to share resources, saving time and money for future program development. When asked about the estimated amount of time saved, most respondents answered that it saved them at least twelve to twenty-four hours of research and preparation time utilizing the **Garden Grocery** resource web site. "I didn't have to recreate something as great as this," and "I appreciate the thoroughness of the presentation. It covers so many aspects of

using the Farmers' Market. I may use it all in one presentation, or use parts of it over several sessions, thank you for making it available.”

## **MARKETING and PUBLICITY**

The biggest push for marketing was initially through several Internet listservs that included Extension and Health Professionals, including Educators and Registered Dietitians to direct them to a website for downloading the **Garden Grocery** program. As indicated previously, close to **3,000** downloads have been recorded using this method of marketing and publicity. The **Garden Grocery** was also in the NEBLINE, at <http://lancaster.unl.edu/nebline/2007/july07/page06.pdf>, a monthly newsletter from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County, reaching an estimated **11,500** individuals.

The **Garden Grocery** has also been marketed via television coverage from an interview on an Omaha, Nebraska, television station and through other web listservs via the Internet. Television interviews generated web site publicity and links to the downloadable program in the Omaha, Denver, Bakersfield, Portland Oregon, Kansas City, and Sacramento metro television audiences. Web site links to the program have been affiliated with other state Extension pages, the WIC program, and personal web pages. As the program enters its' second year of emphasis, future uses of the **Garden Grocery** and the topic of teaching about Farmers' Market Food Safety include developing a training PowerPoint for people selling at the Farmers' Market and other collaborations with state agencies for future program development and funding opportunities.