

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Lynn Residents Earn More SNAP Dollars While Eating Healthier at Local Farmers Markets

**Lynn, MA--August 17, 2017--**Lynn residents who want to use their SNAP dollars to eat healthier are in luck. Due to increased funding and changes to Massachusetts' Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), SNAP recipients can now purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers markets and CSAs, while receiving SNAP matching funds up to \$80 from the state (depending on household size). As a result, The Food Project's SNAP accessible farmers markets in Lynn's Central Square and in West Lynn have seen significant increases in the number of customers flocking to the markets for fresh vegetables this season.

"Recent changes to HIP funding have greatly expanded access to fresh, healthy produce for everyone;" said J. Harrison, The Food Project's Executive Director. "In 2006, The Food Project became one of the first farms in the state to accept SNAP benefits electronically at our Central Square Farmers Market—SNAP sales were about \$1,000 for the entire year. This season, there were \$1,000 in SNAP sales on the opening day alone!"

The state-wide numbers not only bear this out but tell an even bigger story. In 2016, Massachusetts residents spent about \$470,000 in SNAP dollars at farmers markets throughout the state. At the halfway point in the 2017 season, the MA Department of Transitional Assistance (the agency that manages SNAP/HIP funding) reports that residents have already spent \$700,000 on fresh produce at farmers markets, such as The Food Project's Lynn markets.

While the Lynn Central Square Farmers Market has been operating for over a decade, the West Lynn location is new as of this year. Located on Western Avenue between Federal Street and Spencer Street, the market is running Wednesday afternoons from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. through August 30. The market was made possible through the hard work of Ward 6 City Councilor, Pete Capuano, and Director of Lynn Parks and Recreation, Lisa Nerich, who aided in securing the market's location to broaden access for Lynn residents who may find it difficult to get to the Central Square location.

Hazel Kiefer, The Food Project's Lynn Urban Agriculture Manager who runs both markets, shared her long-term goal for the West Lynn Farmers Market: "We hope to create avenues that other farms can benefit from." The Central Square Farmers Market was started informally when two vendors saw the need to bring fresh produce to Lynn residents. Hazel continues, "In 2005, The Food Project formalized the market with the city. Since then, it has expanded to include four produce vendors, one fish vendor, a craft/jewelry stand, a coffee shop, and community space with hundreds of customers each week. We hope to duplicate that success in West Lynn."



To learn more about HIP and find other farmers markets that accept SNAP benefits, visit [www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/hip.htm](http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/hip.htm) or call 1-800-645-8333.

### About The Food Project

Since their founding in 1991, The Food Project has grown into a nationally-recognized non-profit organization that works at the intersection of youth, food, and community. For more than 26 years, The Food Project has brought youth and adults from diverse backgrounds together on their farms to produce healthy food for residents of the city and suburbs to build a local and sustainable food system. The organization believes that food is a unique vehicle for creating personal and social change. The Food Project aims to transform our food system into an equitable and inclusive model that is community-controlled and supports food justice for all.

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### Contact

Ross Condit

Director, Marketing & Communications

The Food Project

(P) 781-259-8621 x30

[rcondit@thefoodproject.org](mailto:rcondit@thefoodproject.org)

