
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 11, 2012

For additional information contact:

Lisa LaPlante at (616) 632-7110 or Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov

**“One Swipe” Farmers’ Market Pilot Takes Root in Kent County
WIC Program Participants here are First in the Country to use Program**

Eating more fruits and vegetables just got easier for clients of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC). One swipe of a WIC Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmer markets this summer.

The Michigan Department of Community Health WIC Division selected the Kent County Health Department as a pilot site for a new project, allowing WIC participants to use their Cash Value Benefits (CVB) to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from participating farmer markets. Previously, WIC participants needed a coupon at Farmers’ Markets to make purchases there, and could only use their electronic cash benefits to buy fresh produce in local grocery stores.

“Employees of the KCHD WIC office were instrumental in our selection as the sole pilot agency for this program, thanks to past successes in piloting and initiating new programs and changes, such as MI-WIC and EBT,” said Cathy Raevsky, Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “It’s an honor to be the first in the nation with this great program.”

The pilot project runs June 1st through October 31st, 2012. During 2011, the KCHD WIC Program issued over \$1,955,701 in Cash Value Benefits to WIC participants. “This is money that goes back into our communities – to our farmers, their employees and their families,” Raevsky added.

In addition to the Cash Value Benefit Farmer Market Pilot Project, the KCHD WIC Program will also be piloting an enhancement to the already successful WIC Project FRESH program. Through this pilot, WIC participants will now receive their Project FRESH benefits electronically via their WIC EBT card. In the past, participants of Project FRESH were given coupon booklets, containing 10 individual coupons worth \$2 each, which can only be spent to purchase fresh, locally grown, fruits and vegetables.

In addition to receiving their WIC Project FRESH benefits electronically, those participating in Project FRESH this year will also receive \$30, an increase from \$20 last year. During the 2011 Project FRESH season, the KCHD WIC program provided \$12,720 worth of coupon vouchers to eligible WIC participants.

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.