

Vouchers and grant funding available for SNAP recipients to double buying power at Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market

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ALTON – Two programs are available to incentivize low-income individuals to shop for fresh, locally-grown produce at the Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients are encouraged to visit the info booth and swipe their LINK cards to use their benefits. When doing so, Alton Main Street will double their dollars, giving shoppers twice the buying power for fresh fruits and vegetables every time they shop.

\$1,600 in grant funding has been distributed to date, and \$9,364 is still available this season. The Market runs through October 20th in the parking lot at the corner of Landmarks Blvd. and Henry Street every Saturday morning from 8:00 a.m. until Noon and on Wednesday evening from 4:00 until 7:00 p.m.

Again this year, Senior Nutrition Vouchers will provide \$25 worth of free produce to all low-income individuals with limited income living in Madison County who are over 60 years of age. New in 2018, instead of the coupons being distributed at the Market, they must be picked up in advance at IMPACT, located at 2735 E. Broadway in Alton (hours of operation are: Mon-Fri from 8am-Noon or 1pm-4pm).

The income guideline for a 1-person household is gross monthly income at or below \$1,870, for a 2-person household the guideline is \$2,536. Applicants must bring a photo I.D. when they pick up their vouchers, and if the Senior receives SNAP benefits, their LINK card can be shown along with the voucher booklet at the Market Info booth to have the \$25 doubled.

Alton Main Street aims to improve access to healthy food thanks to the Illinois EBT Wireless Project grant funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. SNAP benefits (formerly known as LINK and food stamps) are accepted by many vendors. The goal is to boost the sale of Illinois-grown food and provide access to fresh produce to low-income residents by enabling Farmers' Markets to accept federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

Shoppers will find a wide selection of locally-grown seasonal fruit and vegetables, including heirloom varieties and organically grown crops. Produce will be available, along with grass-fed beef, pasture-raised poultry, farm fresh eggs, local honey, hot or iced coffee, fresh bread and other baked goods. In addition, fresh cut flowers, potted plants, and a large assortment of hand-crafted artwork such as pottery, stained glass, soap, candles, and woodworking items are sold.

This year marks the 26th season of the Market, organized by Alton Main Street as part of the organization's efforts to revitalize the Downtown Alton historic district. The events feature a variety of products that are handmade or homegrown within a 50-mile radius.

Live entertainment and other special activities are scheduled for every Saturday throughout the season. Upcoming activities include Free Goat Yoga with River Bend Yoga & Horseshoe Cross Farms on July 28th, and an art demonstration of origami from Taeko Wogi, who is visiting the United States from Japan, on August 4th.

At the Market, anything homegrown or handmade by the vendor is welcome to be sold. Anyone interested in becoming a vendor is encouraged to visit the Events page of www.DowntownAlton.com to register. Pre-registration is not required, vendors simply show up one hour prior to start time to be directed to their booth space. You can receive reminders on what produce is in season, plus upcoming entertainment and activities at: facebook.com/AltonFarmersMarket.