



# **Go Fresh Mobile Market Winter Season Evaluation November 2021 – May 2022**

***Meeting the needs of Springfield through fresh produce deliveries***



## Acknowledgments

Thank you to the sponsors, funders, partner organizations and dedicated staff who contributed to the success of the Go Fresh Mobile Market this winter season. The program continued without interruption with the ongoing leadership of Riley Gilroy as program director. This community leadership enabled Go Fresh to continue to serve the needs of food insecure families across Springfield.

### ***Project Partners:***

- Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts
- Wellspring Community Harvest
- City of Springfield, Health and Human Services
- Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture
- Gardening the Community
- Mosque 13
- UMass Extension Nutrition Education Program
- Mercy Medical Center

***Thank you to the sponsors and foundations that provided support for this program:***



## Introduction

The Go Fresh Mobile Market expanded from a summer season program to year round by operating its first pilot winter market from November 2021 to May 2022 - and given the success of this program plans are underway to continue and expand winter operations. This meant the market only took a two week break from the end of October when the summer 2021 season ended, to mid-November when the winter season began. This expansion was made possible by a three year “Where Health Matters” grant from Health New England. State expansion of funding for Healthy Incentive Program benefits during Covid also made the winter market possible, since funding in previous years ran out by the end of the summer months. So far the state legislature has ensured that these higher funding levels continue.

Moving indoors for the winter months was only possible at sites with community rooms, which meant that some summer sites were not able to participate. While we expected the pilot year to begin with only 3-4 sites, we were surprised by the overwhelming interest in maintaining deliveries by all of our site partners who had facilities. With a few additional sites, the pilot winter market served 11 sites, which demonstrates the strong need for year-round operations.

## Distribution

As the Go Fresh Market expands its outreach, a trial winter season distribution was implemented for the first time during winter 2021-22 with the assistance of a Health New England “Where Health Matters” grant. The program ran from November 2021 through May 2022. Site partners provided indoor facilities allowing shoppers a warm, dry environment to purchase produce. The decision to allow customers the opportunity to choose their own produce rather than having boxes delivered is directly related to the summer survey results clearly expressing a great desire to be in control of what they purchase.

The produce during the winter season is picked up twice a week from area farms in the Pioneer Valley with an emphasis on sourcing from area farmers of color, including crops stored for the winter. Local produce was supplemented by regional purchases to ensure a variety of produce during the winter months. . Selection of produce was based on the purchasing interests of customers from diverse cultural backgrounds and a general interest in accessing fruit. Produce is displayed for customers to select and then purchase using their HIP or SNAP benefits, WIC or senior coupons or occasionally paying with cash or credit cards.

Sites participating in the winter market were limited to facilities with indoor community spaces, including the following:

- Baystate Place
- Berkshire Avenue
- Colonial Estates
- Deborah Barton Neighborhood Center
- Forest Park Manor
- Gentile Apartments
- Independence House
- Linden Towers
- Raymond Jordan Center
- Saab Court and Seniority House
- Riverview Apartments

The mobile market visited three or four sites a day on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and spent an hour at each site. Serving seniors is a major focus for the Go Fresh Mobile Market, and senior housing sites included Seniority House, Riverview Apartments, Berkshire Avenue Congregate Housing, Gentile Apartments, Forest Park Manor Senior Center and Independence House as well as the Raymond Jordan senior center. Additional affordable housing sites and community and health partners are among our site partners. Mobile market customers needed to become accustomed to the new indoor format and schedule, which took some time during the winter season. Many summer customers continued to purchase indoors, and when the Go Fresh van arrives at these sites each week, there are often customers waiting to purchase their produce for the week.

## Promotion and Outreach

Go Fresh continues to advertise both the mobile market and the SNAP/ HIP program at each of

our delivery sites. The posters that were developed in English and Spanish, represent the most common languages across all sites. Translated explanations about the SNAP/HIP program encourages participation from these sizable communities. Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) assisted with identifying and paying for translators. Below are samples of these promotional materials.

Local Fruits and Vegetables in Season  
Delivered Fresh to You

## Go Fresh Mobile Market

**USE YOUR HIP/SNAP BENEFITS**

|         |          |
|---------|----------|
| Apples  | Potatoes |
| Oranges | Tomatoes |
| Lemons  | Peppers  |
| Cabbage | Squash   |
| Lettuce | Corn     |
| Greens  | Onions   |

**Stay Safe Stay Healthy**

**SIGN UP FOR PRODUCE BOX DELIVERIES**  
For forms and more information email us or visit our website at  
 email@domain.com  
 www.gofreshmobilemarket.com

Made with PosterMyWall.com

## SNAP gets you food for you and your family

When you receive SNAP, you get some money every month on an EBT card (pictured).

To see if you are eligible for SNAP, or for help applying, call the **Food Bank of Western MA** at 413-992-6204 or visit [www.mass.gov/snap](http://www.mass.gov/snap).

## HIP is free extra SNAP money for fruits and vegetables!!

If you have SNAP, you automatically have HIP! Use your same EBT card to earn and spend HIP. HIP can only be used at certain farms and farmers' markets.

**We are one of the few places you can use your HIP!**

| SNAP Family Size | Monthly HIP Benefit Amount |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1-2 people       | \$40                       |
| 3-5 people       | \$60                       |
| 6+ people        | \$80                       |

## CSA = weekly produce share

When you sign up for a CSA share, you purchase a "share" of the farm's harvest. You receive distributions of fresh produce twice a month, and it gets paid for automatically with your SNAP and HIP funds. You can opt out at any time.

Ask us for more details and how to sign up!

Education about HIP benefits continues to be an important priority for Go Fresh given the confusing nature of the program. All participants in the federal SNAP food program are automatically enrolled in the Massachusetts HIP program. However the amount of HIP benefits that recipients can use at any one time is limited by the value of their SNAP benefits at the time. HIP benefits are replenished when they are used, up to the monthly allocation, so someone's card can be swiped multiple times to access all of their HIP benefits. HIP benefits can only be used for produce at a farmers market. Customers often choose not to use their SNAP benefits, which can be used for other food products. These basic concepts are described in the flier above that CISA helped Go Fresh to develop. Go Fresh staff are constantly explaining to new people how the program works and the benefits of using their family allocation of HIP benefits at the mobile market.

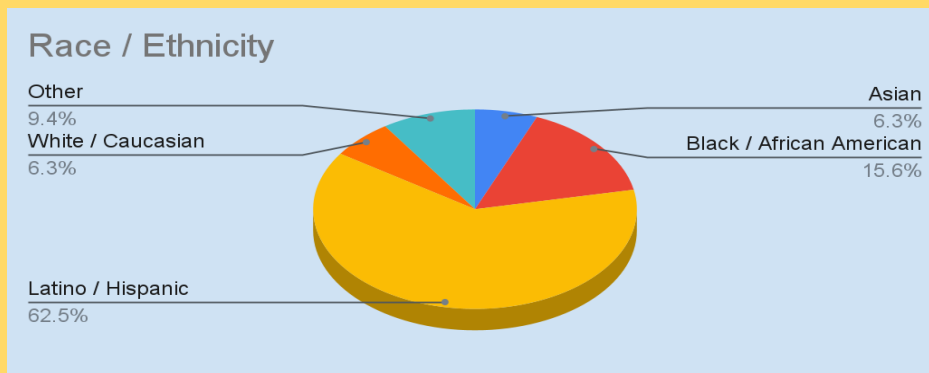
## Survey Results

32 participants completed surveys regarding the Go Fresh Mobile Market winter season. This included 11 surveys in Spanish. Although not every participant completed a survey, the feedback retrieved is a direct reflection of the trial winter distribution.

## Who we served

*The winter season survey results almost mirror the summer season survey results.*

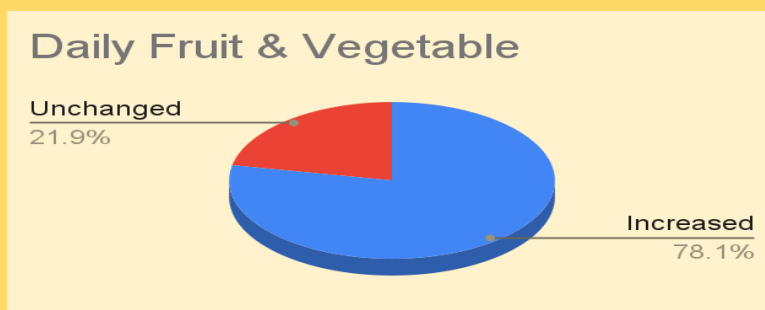
- 78% of the survey respondents were over the age of 50.
- The majority of respondents were Latinx. The next largest group of respondents identified as Black.
- 94% of survey respondents had households between 1 - 3 residents. 62% of that total have 1 resident.



## Impact

The Go Fresh Mobile Market has become consistent and reliable to the families who depend on the produce they are able to purchase in the summer months and now during the winter season.

- 78% of respondents shared that their daily fruit and vegetable consumption has continued to increase with the winter initiative.



- 75% of households have shopped with the program at least four times or more this season. 5% shared that the winter program was their first time.
- All the survey respondents (100%) look forward to shopping with the Go Fresh Mobile Market because they can purchase fresh local, affordable food, and share and learn about nutrition, food prep and health. They love the weekly organic produce options, the ability to get out of the house and the convenience of the market coming to them, especially with an

indoor produce market in their particular residential building each week.

The first winter season proved to be a success and is something the families responding to the survey look forward to continuing year-round. Many participants have expressed how important their relationship and familiarity with the Go Fresh Mobile Market staff is. They appreciate how engaging the staff are and their willingness to find out what types of produce the customers want. Some participants have requested seasonal produce and plants.

## Challenges

This first pilot year of operating Go Fresh during the winter months encountered some challenges and creative problem solving. Mid winter the Covid pandemic forced some of the sites to restrict outsiders from entering buildings which closed the market some weeks. The Raymond Jordan Center closed for the entire season out of caution because it serves seniors. Communication about these closings was inconsistent as building supervisors sought to adapt to the changing pandemic situation, requiring Go Fresh staff to donate produce that had already been purchased for deliveries to area food pantries.

Allowing entrance to non-building residents to access the market was another challenge, given that senior and public housing complexes restrict entrance to outsiders. Go Fresh wanted to ensure that other community members who utilize the summer outdoor mobile market could continue to access the market during the winter as well. For buildings with community rooms with their own outside doors, this was easier to manage. For others, Go Fresh staff made an extra effort to reach long-time customers on the way out of buildings.

Finally additional publicity and promotional information was required to inform building residents that the market had moved indoors. Residents are accustomed to seeing the colorful mobile market van outside during the summer, which reminds them of the weekly time when it is on site. Without that visual reminder, residents were more likely to forget the scheduled time, requiring additional outreach to remind participants.

## Next Steps

The winter mobile market season was an overall great success, with many more sites Go Fresh will continue to build on the lessons learned from its pilot winter market season to ultimately expand.

As the program continues to grow more of an effort to advertise and spread the word will be a priority. Neighborhood outreach will raise awareness that all are welcome to participate in the weekly Go Fresh Mobile Market using their SNAP / HIP benefits. Outreach will begin with local radio stations, churches and various other community outlets where future participants will see and hear the information.

