



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



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For Immediate Release

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First Week of May Brings Opening of Fairfax County Farmers Markets

Spring is here and the 11 Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) Farmers Markets are gearing up for the 2015 season! All markets open the first week of May, providing residents with fresh food options until late fall. These markets are unique in that they are “producer-only” locally grown markets. All vendors come from within a 125-mile radius of Fairfax County and must grow or produce all products they sell at the market. Vendors from Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and Southern Pennsylvania are working hard to bring the freshest produce, meats, cheese, ice cream, breads, honey, sweets, cut flowers, and plants available to Fairfax County residents.

Supporting your local farmers markets is not only delicious, but has a big impact on your health, the local economy and environment! Local produce is picked fresh, and therefore is more nutrient-rich than produce that has traveled an extended period of time. Varieties are chosen on taste and nutrient content, rather than durability. Buying from local farmers markets also helps to keep money circulating through the local economy. If each household in Virginia pledged to spend \$10 a week on locally grown agricultural products it would bring in \$1.65 billion into the Virginia economy each year! Aside from reducing your carbon footprint, buying directly from farmers also gives you the opportunity to choose to support farmers using sustainable growing practices. Sustainable farming practices help prevent soil fertility loss, while reducing pesticide and fertilizer run-off into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Most importantly the farmers markets offer shoppers the opportunity to ask questions and connect with their local farmers.

Join us in making the Buy Fresh Pledge commitment this year, by picking up a pledge card at one of our 11 market locations. Read more about the Buy Fresh Pledge Program, sponsored by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, at <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/news/releases-a/051914frmsmkt.shtml>

FCPA Farmers Markets are also proud to announce that select markets are now accepting SNAP benefits (formerly food stamps) at McCutcheon/Mount Vernon, Reston, Lorton, and Herndon (NEW in 2015). The SNAP at market program is making huge strides to increase access to fresh foods for low income citizens throughout the county, while offering additional support to local farmers. In 2014 alone, Reston provided over \$4,500 in SNAP benefits to low-income citizens. As an extra incentive to buy additional produce, FCPA farmers markets have implemented a “double bucks program” which matches up to \$10 a day to be used on additional produce.

For more information, including locations, directions and a list of vendors at each market go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets or you may contact the Community Horticulture Office at 703-642-0128.

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If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354.