

BRIDGEPORT

THE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT SUCCESS STORIES

No.
592



WHOLESOME WAVE

Bridgeport, CT

Agriculture & Dairy



Based in Bridgeport, **Wholesome Wave's** mission is to nourish neighborhoods by supporting increased production and **access to healthy, fresh, and affordable locally grown food.** Although the number of farmers' markets in Connecticut has skyrocketed in recent years, attracting low-income families to the markets has proved difficult. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) recipients are given electronic benefit cards; farmers' markets need to be certified to accept SNAP and require a specific Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) wireless terminal at the market in order to process SNAP charges. However, viable farmers' market prices are generally beyond the reach of families on a tight budget.

Wholesome Wave has pioneered an innovative solution by offering incentives in the form of coupons or tokens to food assistance recipients that shop at farmers' mar-

kets. The Wholesome Wave Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) has proven to be so effective that it has expanded from 4 states in 2008 to 20 states nationwide in 2010. In 2010 the 26 farmers who participated in the program at 6 CT markets and farm stands received \$80,000 in revenue.



In January 2009, Wholesome Wave received a \$49,990 grant from the **CT Dept. of Agriculture's Agriculture Viability Grant Program,** which is funded by the **Community Investment Act (CIA),** to open farm stands in Bridgeport to increase access to fresh food in underserved neighborhoods. Whole-

some Wave offered its Double Value Coupon Program and anyone purchasing fresh fruit and vegetables with SNAP benefits, WIC farmers market checks, senior WIC farmers' market checks, and WIC cash value vouchers received additional incentives up to \$10 per market day to spend like cash at the market.

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The Community Investment Act, enacted in 2005, stimulates private investment to protect our natural, agricultural, and historic resources, and to assist affordable housing. CIA funds come from a surcharge on real estate document recording fees. They are then invested in agriculture viability, dairy farm support, historic preservation, open space, farmland, affordable housing, Local Capital Improvement Projects and Town Clerk records management.