



## CATAWBA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH FARMERS MARKET TO OPEN JUNE 5

**HICKORY, NC** – Returning for a second year, the Catawba County Public Health Farmers Market will run every Thursday from June 5 through September 25, weather permitting, in Public Health’s parking lot from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The market is open to the public.

New payment options at the market this year include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Electronic Benefits Transfer (SNAP-EBT) and debit cards. The market will continue to accept cash, as well as WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers.

In partnership with the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, the market’s goal is to improve individual and community health by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

WIC clients receive Farmers Market Nutritional Program vouchers when available to supplement their WIC food benefits with fresh, local produce during the summer months. Of the 415 customers surveyed at last year’s market, 88.4% said the market helped increase the amount of fresh produce their family ate. For surveyed WIC clients, that number was 95%.

“We started the market hoping to see not just increased access to healthy foods, but also increased redemption of WIC Farmers Market Nutritional Program vouchers,” said Julie Byrd, WIC Director, Catawba County Public Health. “With the addition of this new market to our community, the Catawba County Public Health Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program had the third highest redemption rate, 62.9%, of Farmers Market Nutritional Program vouchers in North Carolina last year.”

The rate represents a significant increase from the county’s 2012 redemption rate of 51.29%. The statewide average, which tends to hover around 50%, was 48.47% in 2013.

To help provide WIC clients with opportunities to take home even more local produce, Public Health developed a “Bonus Bucks” incentive program. Thanks to donations from community members and von Drehle Corporation, WIC clients were provided with an extra \$4 to spend in conjunction with their farmers market vouchers at the Public Health Farmers Market. This initiative resulted in an additional \$936 worth of produce purchased by WIC clients.

Catawba County WIC clients interested in receiving farmers market vouchers this year may call (828) 695-5884 for more information.

WIC is a federal supplemental nutrition program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and children up to age five. The goal of the program is to help prevent nutrition-related problems in pregnancy, infancy and early childhood. WIC food vouchers are redeemable at participating food stores and farmers’ markets for nutritional foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, milk, juice, eggs, cheese and cereal. WIC also provides nutrition and breastfeeding counseling. The Catawba County WIC office serves more than 4,000 participants a month.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Catawba County Public Health, located off Fairgrove Church Road behind Catawba Valley Medical Center in Hickory, N.C., works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all county residents. For more information, please call (828) 695-5800 or visit [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth).

*“Leading the Way to a Healthier Community”*