



# Reducing Food Insecurity Through Farmers Market Exposure

Rotary Club of Potsdam

# ROTARY CLUB OF POTSDAM

**Duane Pelkey**  
Immediate Past President

**Michael Griffin**  
Past President  
Area Governor

**The Rotary Club of Potsdam worked with GardenShare and the Potsdam Neighborhood Center in the Potsdam, New York, area to reduce food insecurity in our community via exposure to local farmers markets.**



**This project addressed the Rotary areas of focus of disease prevention and treatment, maternal and child health, and economic and community development.**



**DISEASE PREVENTION  
AND TREATMENT**

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**DISEASE PREVENTION  
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**MATERNAL AND  
CHILD HEALTH**

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**DISEASE PREVENTION  
AND TREATMENT**



**MATERNAL AND  
CHILD HEALTH**



**COMMUNITY ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

**GardenShare is a local non-profit organization that promotes a local food system that ensures food security for all St. Lawrence County residents and manages the farmers markets.**



**The Potsdam Neighborhood Center is part of the St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (CDP), which is a private, not-for-profit agency that operates programs and services for low-income families to assist them toward self-sufficiency.**



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- May be influenced by income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability.
- The risk of food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available.
- People living in some urban areas, rural areas, and low-income neighborhoods may have limited access to full-service supermarkets or grocery stores.

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- Compared to state and national averages, St. Lawrence County has higher percentages of overall food insecurity and child food insecurity.
- The average meal cost that food-insecure individuals report spending on food ranges from \$3.25 to \$3.52 in the United States, New York, and St. Lawrence County.

## FOOD INSECURITY

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In St. Lawrence County  
13.5% of the population  
has food insecurity.



**13.5%**



## POVERTY

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Approximately 30% of the food insecure population is above the 200% poverty threshold and does not qualify for SNAP (aka “food stamps”) and other nutrition assistance programs.



**30%**

## CHILDREN

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17.5% of children in  
St. Lawrence County  
are food insecure.



17%

## CHILDREN

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14% of children who are food insecure in the county are likely ineligible for federal nutrition programs because they live in households whose income is above 185% poverty, which is a lower percentage than the national level.



14%

# THE PROJECT

- St. Lawrence County has seven farmers markets with two (Potsdam and Canton) being closest to the Potsdam Rotary home base of Potsdam.



# THE PROJECT

- People living with poverty may not be aware of our farmers markets or may not use farmers markets for healthy food because they think they may not be able to afford it or are just unfamiliar with them.



# THE PROJECT

- In April 2023, the Rotary Club of Potsdam applied for a District Direct Grant of \$333 for a \$1,000 project to alleviate some of this issue.
- The grant was approved by the district in August.

# THE PROJECT

- Potsdam Rotary encouraged those in need to give farmers markets a try by distributing fifty \$20 vouchers from GardenShare and distributing them to those in need via the Potsdam Neighborhood Center.



**\$20 Bonus Bucks Value**  
**Only Redeemable at the**  
**Potsdam Farmers Market**

Ives Park, Main St  
(behind municipal parking lot)  
Saturdays  
9:00 am-2:00 pm  
May through October

# THE PROJECT

- An additional benefit of this project was supporting local farmers, so that they can make a living that supports their families and contribute to a robust local economy.



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# THE PROJECT

- To determine if the project made a difference, we provided a postage-paid survey card to those receiving a voucher to find out if they used the farmers market more often this year and/or would plan to next year.

# THE PROJECT



Thank you for participating in the Rotary Club of Potsdam introduction to the Potsdam Farmers Market. In order to be eligible for future Rotary-sponsored programs, after you have redeemed your Bonus Bucks Card, please complete the following survey and mail back this postage-paid card.

Thank you!

This is the first time I have shopped at the Potsdam Farmers Market:

Yes  No

Did this bonus card make you use the Farmers Market more often, this year?

Yes  No

Do you plan to shop at the Farmers Market next year?

Yes  No

F2023

- The surveys were anonymous to protect the clients who receive benefits.

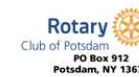
# THE PROJECT

- In September 2023, we provided 50 voucher envelopes to the Potsdam Neighborhood Center.



# THE PROJECT

- The envelopes included
  - The Voucher
  - The Return Survey Card
  - A letter of explanation



Dear Community Member:

Please accept the enclosed \$20 Potsdam Farmers Market Bonus Bucks Card as a gift from the Rotary Club of Potsdam.

To use your \$20 in bonus bucks, simply bring your card to the GardenShare farmers market manager's table at the Potsdam Farmers Market in Ives Park on any Saturday until the market closes on October 28. They will exchange it for tokens, which you can use to purchase fresh food at the market.

After using your card, please fill out the attached three-question postcard and drop it into the mail. This will assure that you will be eligible for future Potsdam Rotary programs.

This Bonus Bucks card is only good in 2023, so please be sure to use it before October 28.

Through this program, the Rotary Club of Potsdam is working with GardenShare and the Potsdam Neighborhood Center to reduce food insecurity in our community via exposure to local farmers markets. It is supported, in part, by a matching grant from Rotary International District 7040.

Please enjoy the amazing local food St. Lawrence County has to offer and help build a strong local food system!

Sincerely,

**Duane Pelkey**  
President  
Rotary Club of Potsdam

[potsdamrotary.org](http://potsdamrotary.org) • [facebook.com/PotsdamRotary](https://facebook.com/PotsdamRotary)

# THE PROJECT

- The Potsdam Neighborhood Center distributed the vouchers to 50 clients.
- The vouchers had to be used by October 28, the date of the last farmers market for the season.



# THE PROJECT

- We sent out a news release in mid-September announcing the project with details about how to request a voucher.

Contact: Michael P. Griffin, 315-265-5584

[photo attached]

#### **Potsdam Rotary Addresses Food Insecurity Through Farmers Market Vouchers**

The Rotary Club of Potsdam is working with GardenShare and the Potsdam Neighborhood Center to reduce food insecurity in our community via exposure to the local farmers market.

The Potsdam Rotary has purchased \$1,000 worth of \$20 Potsdam Farmers Market vouchers from GardenShare and is distributing them to those in need via the Potsdam Neighborhood Center.

"Our hope is that once a family tries the farmers market and likes it, that they will return on their own more often, leading to better access to healthier food," says Potsdam Rotary President Duane Pelkey. "People living with poverty may not be aware of our farmers markets. Or they may not use farmers markets for healthy food because they think they may not be able to afford it. We hope that our vouchers will get them to give the market a try."

Pelkey says that an additional benefit of the project is supporting local farmers so that they are able to make a living that supports their families and contribute to a robust local economy.

The project is supported in part by a matching grant from Rotary District 7040 to address the Rotary areas of focus of disease prevention and treatment, maternal and child health, and economic and community development.

GardenShare is a local non-profit organization that promotes a local food system that ensures food security for all St. Lawrence County residents. The Potsdam Neighborhood Center is part of the St. Lawrence County Community Development Program, a private, not-for-profit agency that serves St. Lawrence County, and can be reached at 315-265-3920.

**Photo caption: The Potsdam Rotary Club has purchased \$1,000 worth of \$20 Potsdam Farmers Market vouchers from GardenShare and is distributing them to those in need via the Potsdam Neighborhood Center. Left to right: President Duane Pelkey and Potsdam Neighborhood Center Director Kristal Hayes.**

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“Our hope is that once a family tries the farmers market and likes it, that they will return on their own more often, leading to better access to healthier food. People living with poverty may not be aware of our farmers markets. Or they may not use farmers markets for healthy food because they think they may not be able to afford it. We hope that our vouchers will get them to give the market a try.”

Duane Pelkey

# THE PROJECT

- Over the next few months, clients mailed their postcards back to our club.
- GardenShare invoiced the club for the used vouchers on October 31.



## USAGE

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Out of the 50 vouchers distributed, 37 clients used their voucher at the farmers markets.



74%

## RESPONSE CARD

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Out of those 37 clients, 31 returned the survey card.



84%

## FIRST-TIME SHOPPERS

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19% reported that this was the first time they had shopped at a farmers market.



19%

## RETURN VISITS

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94% reported that the voucher made them shop more often at a farmers market this year.



94%

## LONG-TERM

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94% planned to shop at a farmers market again next year.



94%

# PROJECT INCOME

- District Simplified Grant funds \$270.81
- Rotary Club of Potsdam \$541.64
- **TOTAL INCOME \$812.45**

# PROJECT EXPENDITURES

- Voucher Purchase from GardenShare \$754.80
- Envelopes \$2.55
- Postage \$30.60
- Printing \$24.50
- **TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$812.45**

# SCALEABLE

- This project could be scaled up for larger or multiple communities.
  - Increase number of farmers markets.
  - Consider venues in addition to farmers markets.
  - Increase number of vouchers.
  - Increase expenditure.



# QUESTIONS

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**Michael Griffin**  
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