

Foodlink debuts third Curbside Market vehicle, joins new SNAP program

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Foodlink's Curbside Market, which brings fresh, affordable produce into low-income, underserved communities, made a "double" announcement Aug. 16 that will benefit its growing customer base.

At Andrews Terrace, one of the most popular Curbside stops, Foodlink officials and other major stakeholders gathered to celebrate the completion of the program's third vehicle – a wheelchair-accessible truck that debuted this summer. In addition, Foodlink announced it has joined the nationally recognized program, Double Up Food Bucks, which offers significant savings to customers who use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, formerly called food stamps.

"The Curbside Market has proven to be the most effective way to make healthy, affordable food available in low-income communities throughout the greater-Rochester area," said Mitch Gruber, Chief Program Officer at Foodlink. "We are confident that this new vehicle and our partnership with Double Up Food Bucks will allow us to reach more people and provide greater savings to those who need it most."

After an early-morning downpour, the skies cleared for Foodlink's announcement, which was moved outside adjacent to the vehicle near the corner of St. Paul and Andrews streets. Many Andrews Terrace residents eagerly listened to the news, as they waited in line for their weekly selection of Curbside's fresh produce.

The Curbside Market delivers fruits and vegetables into communities that lack access to them. Residents who live in USDA-defined "food deserts" often don't have the means to purchase healthy food at affordable prices. The market makes weekly visits to more than 60 locations such as affordable housing

communities, senior living facilities and federally-qualified health centers. In 2015, the program served more than 15,000 customers and sold nearly 125,000 pounds of produce at 102 sites.

The new truck was funded through partnerships with the Greater Rochester Health Foundation and Citizens Bank.

“We know that our community can only thrive if our residents are healthy,” said Heidi Burke, Senior Program Officer at the Greater Rochester Health Foundation. “This new Curbside Market truck will provide fresh, wholesome food options for even more Rochester families.”

Construction was completed over the summer by M Design Vehicles, which constructs many of the food trucks seen around Rochester. A commercial-grade refrigerator and racking were installed – as was a generator, new lighting and a sink. Customers have access to a wheelchair lift, a wider aisle, and have the opportunity to shop from outside the vehicle for the first time thanks to several outward-facing produce bins.

“We’re proud to partner with Foodlink and are excited to see this new, state-of-the-art truck getting on the road and serving our community,” said Paul Taffe, President of Citizens Bank, New York. “Curbside provides a vital service that so many families in our community rely on and we’re happy to play a role in its growth and success.”

Many of the SNAP-eligible customers who shop at the new Curbside Market vehicle will benefit greatly from the Double Up Food Bucks program, a Michigan-based program created by the Fair Food Network that was introduced into western New York by the Field & Fork Network through a Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant from the USDA. The program doubles the value (maximum of \$10 per day) of federal assistance dollars spent at participating farmers markets. The program has now expanded into 19 states.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Foodlink and their Curbside Market program to bring our successful nutrition incentive, Double Up Food Bucks, to the Rochester community," said Lisa Tucker, co-founder and Executive Director of the Field & Fork Network. "We believe access to affordable fresh foods should be available for everyone. We look forward to what we hope will be a beneficial partnership for the entire Rochester community."



Curbside Market, which now operates a year-round schedule, began as a Rochester-centric enterprise, but has now expanded into eight of the 10 counties in Foodlink’s service area. It made its first stops in Seneca and Yates counties this summer. Produce options rotate based on the season and the truck often accommodates requests for special appearances at festivals, fairs and pilot sites.

“On behalf of the citizens of Rochester, I thank Foodlink for providing even more resources that will give residents greater access to healthy foods, fresh produce, and good nutrition,” Mayor Lovely Warren said. “As we work in Rochester to create safer streets, more jobs for our citizens and better educational

opportunities for our children – increasing access to a healthy lifestyle is key to these efforts. Foodlink is making our community stronger by bringing much-needed services to areas of need.”

The market also welcomes Foodlink's nutrition educators to various sites, so customers can gain tips on saving money and preparing delicious, nutritious meals. The current schedule, which can be found at www.foodlinkny.org, runs through November before it is altered for the winter months.

"Today's announcement represents not only our vision of a healthy, hunger-free community, but about how far Foodlink has come in recent years," said Executive Director Julia Tedesco. "Foodlink is our region's food bank, but we consider ourselves a community food resource center and a public health organization tasked with improving the lives of our neighbors by leveraging food to build the physical, social, and financial health of our region."

For more information about the Curbside Market, visit www.foodlinkny.org

. For more information about the Double Up Food Bucks program in New York, visit www.doubleupnys.com