

FY 2014

\$94,681 to the Thai Community Development Center, Los Angeles, CA, to promote the East Hollywood Certified Farmers' Market and increase awareness of WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program and other Federal benefits at the market.

Final Report

Farmers Market Promotion Program

Final Performance Report

For the Period of October 1, 2014 – September 30, 2016

Date: 12/23/16

Recipient Name: Thai Community Development Center

Project Title: East Hollywood Certified Farmers' Market Expansion, Training and Marketing Campaign for Food Access and Farmer Training in the East Hollywood Promise Zone

Grant Number: 14-FMPPX-CA-0016, CA-282

Project Location: Los Angeles, CA

Year of Grant Award: 2014

Amount Awarded: \$94,681

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Program Summary - Provide a brief summary regarding the goals and objectives, activities performed, beneficiaries, collaborators, and your most impressive (result) measurement.

The Thai Community Development Center (Thai CDC) created the East Hollywood Certified Farmers' Market (EHCFM) in 2012 to increase access to healthy, fresh, organic produce for low-income residents of the East Hollywood area in Los Angeles, California. Located on the portal plaza of the Metro Red Line subway station, Thai CDC's EHCFM aims to develop direct linkages between agricultural producers, nonprofits and consumers. We support small farms by providing them with a public venue tied to public transportation, as well as providing them with entrepreneurship support. We have a multi-system, inter-agency approach, with collaborations from multiple stakeholders using the market as a platform to spread awareness about health, nutrition, healthcare services, local community organizations, neighborhood events, government benefits, and other social programs. Thai CDC has developed nutrition education programs such as our summer cooking demonstrations. Thai CDC also educates people about Covered California health insurance plans and can enroll customers into the program. The market acts as an anti-hunger resource for low income families, who use our Market Match program to increase their purchasing power. The program provides free market dollars to customers receiving SSI, CalFresh, and WIC. All farmers at the market also accept WIC and SFMP checks. Neighborhood residents come to our market to connect with local nonprofits, schools, and neighborhood councils; to find out about community events and activities; to access resources in their language of choice; and to connect with local farmers. Two of our most impressive results are the increase of our farmers' annual revenue by more than 100% during

the grant period and the related 89% increase in the number of low-income customers at the market.

Goals and Objectives - Describe the general goals and objectives (scope) of the project:

During the project period, Thai CDC aimed to increase access to and consumption of local produce in the East Hollywood area, as well as expand and improve the existing EHCFM. To increase access to the EHCFM, Thai CDC planned to implement quarterly outreach campaigns to increase awareness of the Women, Infants and Children Farmers' Market Nutritional Program (WIC FMNP), Senior Farmers' Market Nutritional Program (SFMNP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in East Hollywood and adjacent areas, with the goal of reaching at least 3,000 people per outreach campaign. Thai CDC also launched a multi-media campaign promoting the EHCFM to increase awareness of the market among the East Hollywood community. We planned on increasing the amount of people attending the EHCFM to 600 per market day by 2015.

Thai CDC sought to improve the market by offering selling opportunities to a greater number of farmers, as well as free training from our award-winning Small Business Program to those vendors. Another goal was to host entertainment and other events to draw customers to the marketplace.

Thai CDC's 6 overarching goals were to:

- 1) Integrate the market into the social and cultural life of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural community of East Hollywood;
- 2) Increase awareness and access to local food programs and products that enable families to live healthier;
- 3) Negotiate purchasing agreements with restaurant, schools, and Thai Town Marketplace vendors;
- 4) Provide entrepreneurship and small business training for EHCFM farmers;
- 5) Increase the numbers of farmers at the market; and
- 6) Collect and disseminate results of implementing project goals.

Indicate the need for the grant project prior to the implementation of grant activities.

East Hollywood, California has been an area that suffers from rampant food insecurity. In 2003, a food assessment of the Hollywood area showed that while people were aware of the benefits of healthy food, they were unable to afford fruit and vegetables.¹ The path to accessing healthy and nutritious food was fraught with obstacles. The five largest barriers that prevented people from accessing adequate nutritious food were:

- Inability to afford food in stores

¹ LA Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness, Hollywood Foods Needs Assessment: Research and Recommendations on Improving Access to Healthy Foods for Three Low-Income Populations, 2003

- Severe housing burden, resulting in buying less food or low quality food (families and seniors)
- Lack of knowledge about resources including food stamps and social benefit programs
- The inability of persons on SSI to qualify to receive food stamps in California
- Lack of cooking facilities, storage and refrigeration (homeless only)

It is easy to understand why families and individuals in East Hollywood cannot afford to buy healthy food. Looking at the above barriers to access quality food, we divided the problem into two categories: high cost and lack of information about resources. Unfortunately, the diet of Americans is related to their income. The study of Economic Research Services, which is based on the Healthy Eating Index (HEI), shows that low-income people have a lower quality of diet than those with higher incomes. While 12% of people with higher incomes had “good” diet quality, only 6% of Food Stamp Program (FSP) participants were considered to have a “good” diet. Also, 23% of FSP participants had “poor” diet quality while only 14% of higher-income people fell into that category. The study clearly shows that lower-income Americans eat fewer vegetables, fruits, and dairy products as well as have access to a smaller variety of food.²

In Los Angeles, according to the 2010 Census, 21% of residents live below the poverty line, compared to the state average of 14%.³ These conditions of poverty have taken a decided toll on the health of the populace. Within the Metro Service Planning Area 4 of Los Angeles County, where East Hollywood is located, 70% of adults with diabetes are low-income; almost 80% of adults reporting fair/poor health are low-income.⁴

The second barrier to accessing healthy food and fresh produce is a lack of information and resources. According to the families surveyed by the LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness, the greatest obstacle to adequate produce consumption is lack of information as to where to obtain inexpensive fruits and vegetables. Twenty-seven percent of those surveyed did not know where to obtain fruit and vegetables, and 15% said that they weren’t aware of any food lines that distributed fruits and vegetables.

The surveys and community meetings hosted by the LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness indicated that many low-income families lacked information about an important source of fresh, affordable produce: farmers’ markets. Only 38% of survey participants reported buying produce at farmers’ markets.

Farmers’ markets weren’t the only healthy food option survey participants were unable to access. Only 20% of participants in the family survey reported that they currently use the food stamp program, however, 39% were interested in applying for the program. These findings

² Variyam, Jayachandran; Blaylock, James; and Smallwood, David. USDA's Healthy Eating Index and Nutrition Information. Technical Bulletin No. (TB-1866) 26 pp, May 1998

³ U. S. Census Bureau. (2000). American FactFinder fact sheet: Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved February 10, 2014, from http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml#none

⁴ “Chronic Conditions of Californians: Findings from the 2003 California Health Interview Survey.” University of California, Los Angeles Center for Health Policy Research: 2005.

show a lack of information about governmental food programs for one of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Upon being asked why they never applied for food stamps, many responded with common misconceptions about their eligibility for the Food Stamp Program. Some thought they could not receive benefits while still working. The undocumented immigrants were not aware that their U.S.-born children are entitled to benefits of governmental food programs. Another barrier to food stamp access is the lack of basic information about how and where to apply, as well as confusion and frustration during the process of applying for food stamps.⁵

The above conditions indicated the need for greater health and nutrition outreach and opportunities in East Hollywood and it is those conditions that we began to change in 2014 with the help of the USDA.

Activities - Describe the activities used to achieve the goals and objectives. This should include measurement of any baseline data. Include significant contribution/roles(s) of project partners.

Since the creation of our farmers' market, Thai CDC has been true to its mission of tackling poverty, promoting healthy behavior, and increasing access to social services. In order to integrate our market into the social and cultural life of East Hollywood residents, we hosted a wide array of programming throughout the grant period. These programs were accessible to all nonprofit entities, local musicians, service providers, and city government. During the grant period, we hosted a total of 114 outreach events, a month-long health fair, two toy giveaways, and six cooking demonstrations.

Baseline data:

While the EHCFCM attempted to involve the community in our activities prior to receiving this grant, we did not have the capacity to schedule regular activities.

List of activities:

- Invited LA City Election staff to conduct a GOTV campaign at the market
- Invited the Department of Public Social Services to conduct CalFresh and Medi-Cal sign ups monthly
- Attended local neighborhood council meetings to announce our market events
- Attended the California Small Farm Conference in Spring 2015 to network with farmers and other farmers market managers throughout the state of California
- Attended the quarterly meetings of Los Angeles Food Policy's (LAFP) 'Farmers Markets for All' working group
- Attended Food Day activities at L.A. City Hall during National Food Day 2014 - 2016

⁵ LA Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness, Hollywood Foods Needs Assessment: Research and Recommendations on Improving Access to Healthy Foods for Three Low-Income Populations, 2003

- Invited dietitians from the Los Angeles Dietetic Association and hosted “Ask a Dietitian” sessions at the market
- Invited Safe Moves, a nonprofit organization that informs youth and families about traffic safety, to do outreach at the market
- Hosted Covered California outreach, education, and enrollment during the open enrollment period
- Hosted a month-long health fair that educated the public about mental health issues, women’s health, diabetes, and allergy awareness
- Invited the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking (CAST) to outreach at the market weekly
- Invited Asian Pacific Healthcare Venture (APHCV) to do outreach, education, and civic engagement activities at the market
- Invited West Coast University Students to provide free blood pressure, blood sugar, and vision testing at the market.
- Invited several musicians to perform at market
- Collaborated with a local homeless shelter and donated unsold fruit and vegetables to them
- Held healthy food demonstrations and smoothie bike demonstrations in the Spring and Fall months
- Hosted a local aquaponics workshop
- Reached out to area service organizations and market-goers to recruit volunteers
- Utilized Thai CDC’s Volunteer Outreach program to recruit volunteers
- Reached out to local musicians using social media and fliers
- Brought back local musicians that had already performed at the market
- Distributed EHCFM flyers to local nonprofits and organizations, such as Hollywood Family Source Center, Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, Los Feliz Neighborhood Council, East Hollywood Neighborhood Council, , and Hollywood Studio Neighborhood Council
- Distributed APHCV fliers at the market
- Found healthy recipes and posted them on our social media sites
- Created and distributed recipes in English, Spanish, and Thai
- Launched a multi-media campaign that included fliers, events, and free online marketing using Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter
- Our business counselor conducted site visits during market operations
- Increased the number of weekly farmers by two, but for logistical reasons, the two new farmers were unable to continue operating at the market

Accomplishments - Describe what was accomplished during the entire project using measurable results. Provide baseline data and actual completed project data, i.e., “before and after” measurements. Include a summary of the required metrics (before and after) (FMPP Guidelines/Announcement). Be comprehensive, descriptive and detailed in regard to each accomplishment. These may include unfavorable or unusual developments, as well. If

developed with grant funds, provide website addresses and links to any materials made available via the Internet.

Prior to the grant period, the EHCFM generated \$110 in rent per market day, had an average of 6 – 8 farmers, and no volunteers. The EHCFM hosted musical entertainment every two months and had approximately 300 customers per day. The average number of EBT customers was 11, the average number of SSI customers was 1, and the average number of WIC customers was 4 each market day.

Currently, the EHCFM generates \$276 per day (a 150% increase), has an average of 6 – 8 farmers, and 3 volunteers. It hosts a musician, dietician, or community nonprofit every market day – we have hosted 114 outreach events during the two year grant period – and approximately 487 customers per day. The average number of EBT customers is 17 (a 54% increase), the average number of SSI customers is 14 (a 1,300% increase), and the average number of WIC customers is 13 (a 225% increase). In our application, we promised to increase our daily total sales from \$2,000 to \$3000, an increase of 50%. We are happy to report that we have increased daily sales to \$3,498 -- an increase of 72%.

All our farmers have expanded to sell at one additional market and one of our farmers has expanded to two additional markets. This expansion was in part enabled by the increased revenue brought in by the 62% increase in customers over the grant period.

Prior the first grant year, we served a total of 1,198 combined low-income clients who used public benefits (CalFresh, WIC, & SSI). In the first year of the grant period, our number of clients jumped to 1,916, a growth of 59% in the number of low-income clients served. In the second year, our total clients increased by an additional 18% (or 89% since the beginning of the grant period), with a total of 2,272 customers using public benefits at the market. This enormous increase is indicative of our great success in outreaching to our low-income area residents.

In terms of economic impact for our farmers, prior the grant period, they collected a total of \$89,256 in revenue annually. After the first year of the grant period, our farmers' annual revenue grew to \$151,878, --a 70% growth in revenue. In the second year of the grant, the farmers were able to increase their overall revenue to \$182,946.00 -- a 20% increase from the first year and a 104% increase overall.

Additionally, to publicize the EHCFM, we made and hung a large promotional banner at the station plaza site, which reaches at least an estimated 3,000 people per day, increasing our foot traffic considerably. In addition, we've also had a huge growth in the number of social media followers on all our accounts. The EHCFM was able to produce and distribute new promotional reusable shopping bags and order additional EBT coins, which increased our capacity to serve the increased number of EBT customers.

Beneficiaries - Describe and provide the actual numbers for both the direct and indirect beneficiaries of grant activities. As appropriate, include demographic composition of market vendors, customers and the surrounding market area (income level, ethnicity, age, etc.).

Describe how specific groups benefitted from the grant, including any potential economic impact. Provide data supporting these conclusions. Ideally, this should include feedback from vendors and consumers, as well as any available quantitative data.

All participating farmers reported an increase in sales. Additionally, farmers benefited from the increase in foot traffic brought about by our marketing and advertising. Due to our business counseling, farmers were able to more easily attract customers and their average weekly sales each increased, in some cases by more than \$100 per week.

Families and individuals with children benefitted from our farmers' acceptance of WIC checks and our Market Match program, which provided additional income to spend at the market. Prior to the grant period, the PHF WIC program was implemented in order to increase WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) redemption rate. WIC representatives were stationed at farmers' markets that received Market Match, and this brought WIC clientele to the market. WIC recipients were able to acquire their FMNP checks and redeem them on the spot. The first grant period marks the third year that PHF WIC programs tabled at the market. During the first year of the grant period, the EHCFM redeemed more than \$17,000 in FMNP checks and more than 850 families visited the market during the FMNP promotion period. In the second year, more than \$18,000 was redeemed in FMNP checks and approximately 950 families visited the market. Our partnership with PHF WIC has been beneficial for the WIC program, WIC program participants, and our farmers. We have also received feedback from many of the program recipients that this program allows them to purchase fruits that they would otherwise have to forgo. The young children are always especially excited when they get the chance to sample strawberries and blueberries.

In addition to the increase in EBT customers and spending, DPSS has received approximately 60 SNAP applications and spoken to 500 people about the program, increasing the food budget of each family enrolled. Monthly visits from DPSS have increased area awareness of food subsidies and their acceptance at farmers' markets. The exponential increase in spending for EBT customers (a 54% increase) indicates that the market has successfully increased awareness of the EHCFM's options for low-income customers.

Our commitment to our senior population has been bolstered with the help of Hunger Action Los Angeles (HALA). HALA's Market Match has helped low-income seniors access quality produce at the EHCFM. During the first year of the grant period, we increased our average number of seniors served per week from 4 to 14. In our second year, we served an average of 19 seniors a week. Additionally, seniors at a nearby senior housing complex have benefited from the increased sense of community and having a newly-activated public space that is easily accessible. Many of our seniors have become regular customers and look forward to the market every Thursday as an opportunity to bring their friends and neighbors so they can access the resources that the market provided. Unfortunately, the funding for the program was exhausted, so HALA had to restrict the number of seniors participating in this program.

All low-income participants benefitted from the increased amount of Market Match that we have been able to offer in the last two years. The EHCFM disbursed an annual \$26,872 in

Market Match, a 6,495% increase from 2013. This increase exponentially increased the ability of low-income consumers to access healthy fruits and vegetables.

Area residents benefitted from the USDA grant because the local farmers' market and increase in customers made the local streets more populated and safer. Many residents were introduced to healthy options that they had no idea previously existed. One customer credits the weekly market with keeping her diabetes under control, while another used it as a means of changing his diet after he was diagnosed with a brain tumor.

All collaborating agencies' participation resulted in enhanced visibility for their work within low-income communities. For instance, Hunger Action LA (HALA) was able to advocate more strongly for increased food security among low-income families, and Asian Pacific Health Care Venture (APHCV) benefited by expanding its services and health expertise to a diverse group of low-income and vulnerable populations. The EHCFM supports the Urban Environmental Policy Institute (UEPI) mission of expanding and bolstering local food systems and access to good food among low-income communities.

Lessons Learned - Discuss the lessons that were learned from completing the project. Lessons learned may have influenced the direction of the project, helped improve the process, and/or optimized the results. Sharing these experiences may be quite helpful to those seeking to learn from your experiences and to achieve similar results.

The most successful and enduring part of our farmers' market project has been the direct outreach component. Located on a busy street corner at the intersection of a variety of public transit options, the EHCFM is able to reach a large segment of the population. Furthermore, our market manager booth is regarded as a source of all-purpose assistance and local knowledge. Residents approach us with questions about problems ranging from finding housing to dealing with domestic violence. As a nonprofit who partners with many other organizations to meet our community's needs, we are able to give accurate advice and direct residents to area organizations that can offer aid. Connecting market-goers to programs that tangibly increased their well-being was an effective strategy to establish the market as an integral East Hollywood resource. Our ability to reach and assist the East Hollywood population is our greatest strength and residents know that every Thursday they can seek our help, advice, and company.

However, we have also faced challenges related to program implementation. The East Hollywood area is extremely multi-lingual, which proved a problem both for outreaching and when communicating with farmers. Patrons speak English, Spanish, Armenian, Russian, Thai and other languages, while most of our farmers speak only English and Spanish. This is a challenge both from a customer service perspective (our Armenian speaking customers are unable to have the same friendly chats with our farmers as our English- and Spanish- speaking customers) and from a business perspective, as our communications with the Spanish-speaking farmers must be translated. To navigate this challenge, we use local volunteers to assist with communication and translation. This also strengthens the community spirit between diverse groups of people in the neighborhood.

Negotiating purchase agreements proved to be another challenge. Many local Thai restaurants purchase their vegetables from the local wholesale market, which can offer produce at a less expensive price point than the farmers' market. It is difficult to communicate the benefits of purchasing from small farmers, especially when there are several different languages involved. That is not to say that it is impossible, but simply that encouraging purchasing agreements with farmers will require more education on the benefits of buying from certified farmers.

Recruitment was also difficult initially. Farmers' markets in low-income areas are often less profitable than those in wealthy areas – it is that sort of phenomena that creates food deserts. However, we discovered that farmers often were able to become very profitable when given enough time. It may take longer to discover a steady customer base but once that was achieved, our farmers became much more successful. While farmers might stay a month or two, then give up, those who stayed long enough to acquire loyal customers and form a relationship with area residents and institutions were able to meet and exceed their financial goals. Furthermore, the increase in Market Match and in low-income consumers frequenting the market resulted in 104% greater revenue for our farmers over the grant period.

Another one of our most successful programs was our recruitment of volunteers and professionals. Many people in the community have been eager to help and we have been able to recruit multilingual volunteers to serve the market. Aside from neighborhood volunteers, we've had many dietitians and young doctors visit the market. Allowing people to ask questions on the spot about diet and health – as well as testing blood pressure and other services – has increased the health of the area. This advice, in conjunction with the healthy fruit and vegetables offered at the market, has made a real difference in the well-being of local residents.

The L.A. County Department of Social Services (DPSS) has been an invaluable aid. By signing people up at the market, instead of requiring them to visit their offices or navigate a confusing online application, DPSS is able to reach a segment of the population who would otherwise go unserved. Furthermore, they are able to answer eligibility questions in real-time, motivating more people to sign up. Subsequently, those that have signed up can benefit from the healthy produce at the market.

For others starting similar projects, we would advise being mindful of the fact that the farmers need to drive a long way to come to most farmers' markets. Typically, they do not have time to participate in outside activities. As such, any program that depends on extra farmer participation is likely to be difficult to complete. As an example, our farmers did not have time to participate in our Entrepreneurship Training Program. However, they are interested in improving their businesses and learning more about entrepreneurship. When offered training that fit into their schedule, such as our business counselor visiting the market to observe their business and offer tips, they were eager to participate.

This time constraint also applies to our attempt at creating Community Supported Agriculture. While the research and business plan we completed has since been useful in encouraging partnerships between our farmers and local businesses, Community Supported Agriculture was

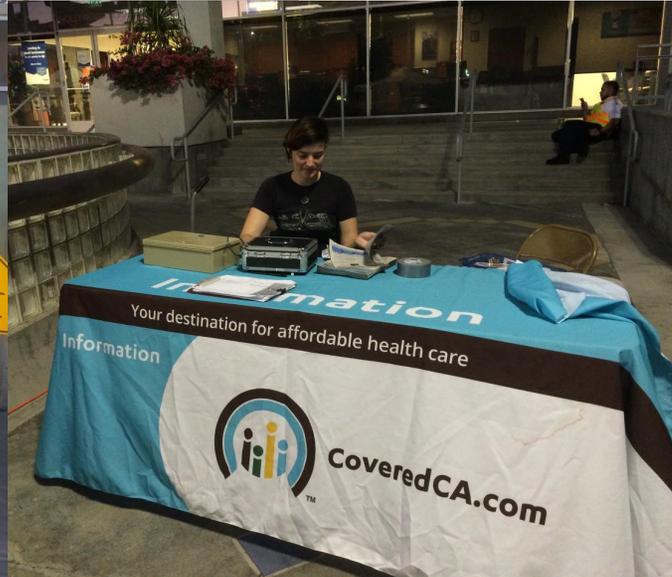
too time-intensive for the farmers to participate. In the future, we will depend more heavily on our reliable volunteers and be mindful of our farmers' busy schedules.

Report any specific and significant IMPACT (newsworthy and/or unexpected and positive) items that AMS can highlight in success stories.

Due to the funding provided under FMPP:

- EBT sales increased from an average of \$203/week in the first year, to an average of \$293/week in the second year.
- Our highest EBT sales day was \$446 and our highest yield in farmers' income in one market day is \$6,297 for 7 farmers.
- Our farmers saw an increase in sales from \$89,256 prior to the grant year, to \$151,878 in 2014-2015, (70% increase). And in 2015-2016, the sales increase once more to \$186,506, 25% increase from the previous year.
- Our farmers doubled their annual revenue since the start of the grant period.
- The EHCFM has increased the number of low-income customers by 89%.
- We hosted 114 events, or at least one event every market day.
- We were able to invite students from local Pharmacology schools who offered free blood pressure, blood sugar, and vision screenings.
- Continued partnerships with local DPSS and WIC offices had resulted in the increase of capacity of our market to serve low-income individuals and families with children under 5.

Nonprofits Outreach



Outreach at the
East Hollywood
Certified Farmers
Market

Civic Engagement

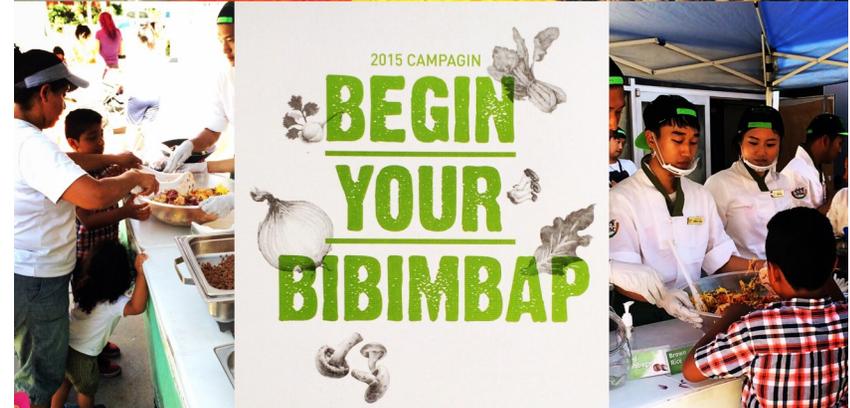
Voter registration and Get Out The Vote (GOTV) activities at the market.



Health & Wellness

Market sponsored programs:

- Smoothie powered bicycle demo
- Free Blood pressure/sugar check
- Healthy food demo (Bibimbap)
- PSA from LA County Health Department



Health Fair



The EHC FM held a month long health fair where we invite service providers to outreach at our market.

We provide information on mental health, women's health and general wellness.



DPSS



DPSS activities at the market:

- CalFresh enrollment
- MediCal enrollment
- Q&A with DPSS staff



WIC Partnership

WIC staff distributed the annual Farmers' Market Nutritional Program (FMNP) checks to WIC recipients.



Toy Giveaway



The market gave away toys to the children of East Hollywood. The toys were collected through the Asian Pacific Community (APA) Toy Drive.



Seed Planting Demonstration



The market did seed planting demonstration in front of the children of East Hollywood.



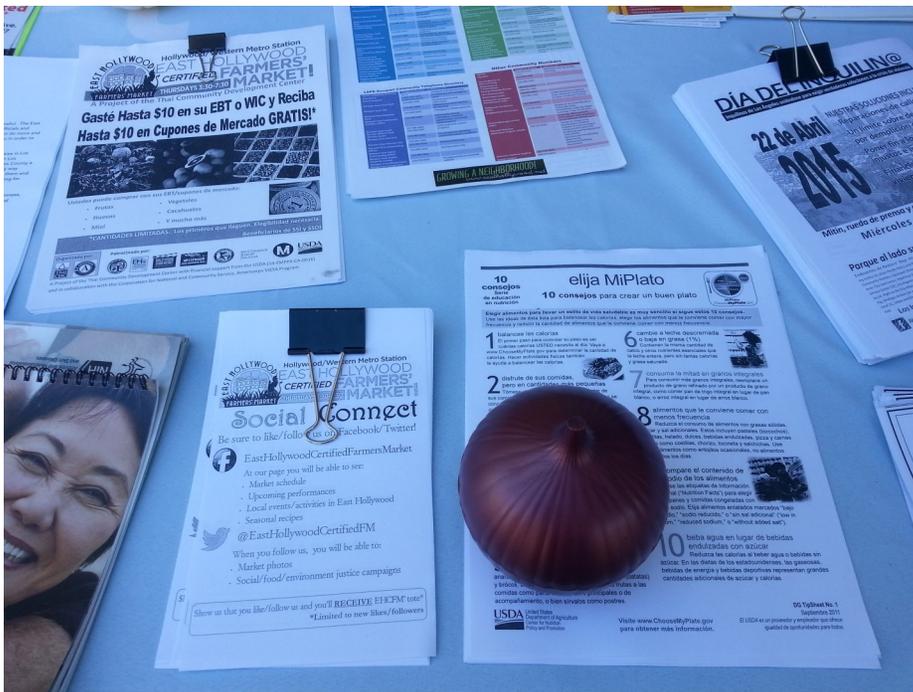
Musicians

Local musicians performing at our market



Resources at the Info Booth

We connect community members with current community events (Candidate Forums, housing workshops, etc.), healthy recipes and wellness guides.





Our Farmers

Our farmers came from these counties:

- San Bernardino
- San Luis O Bispo
- Los Angeles
- Fresno



Our Farmers' Market

Pictures from our market



Food Waste

The farmers donate some of their unsold produce to local homeless shelter (PATH Los Angeles).



Our Partners



MCCORMACK
BARON
SALAZAR

Our Funders

