

Harlem Walks to the Farmers Market

Posted At : August 15, 2014 9:53 AM | Posted By : Food Bank Staff

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By Shanon Morris

It's growing season again, which means that carts full of fruits and vegetables are on every other corner and farmers markets are filled with city folks looking to buy local. As Associate Director of Community Nutrition, I work on nutrition programming for Food Bank's network, but also provide nutrition education to the Harlem residents at our Community Kitchen and Food Pantry. One of my favorite activities is going on farmers market walks with our clients. We gather at the Community Kitchen at 116th Street and walk to 125th Street. During that time we chat about life and I get the chance to stay connected with the community in which I live and serve.

Once at the market, we watch a cooking demonstration by Stellar Farmers Market

nutritionists, who use Food Bank's [Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables](#) recipes to show people how to turn local produce into tasty and healthy dishes. As the cooking demo ends, the moment our clients have been waiting for arrives: I give out Health Bucks to everyone who attended. Health Bucks are \$2 vouchers provided by the Department of Health to help increase access to local produce. They can be used at all New York City farmers markets. With Health Bucks in hand, our clients and I walk around the market looking at the day's offerings, and they buy fresh fruits and vegetables to take home. Afterward, we walk back to the Community Kitchen together.

I've been leading farmers market tours for three years and have been joined by many of the same clients on every walk. They start asking me about it well before growing season arrives. Clearly, it's

become a tradition. I hope that our talks, the cooking demonstrations, and the produce they're able to buy have helped influence healthy behavior changes in their lives. Just as we strive to build healthy relationships with people, it's important to also strive for healthy relationships with food!

To find a farmers market in New York City, visit www.nyc.gov/health/farmersmarkets.

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