

As farm to institution program's increase in number across North America<sup>1</sup> analysis highlight's that both community gardens and farmers' markets can improve fresh food accessibility to reach residents in mature, inner-suburban neighborhoods<sup>2,3</sup>, in addition to rural communities<sup>4</sup>. Recognizing that food is medicine, it is equally important to assure access to fresh produce for individuals with chronic illness to improve and maintain their health<sup>5,6</sup>. With increasing regularity, health advocates, and community organizations are focusing health and nutrition education outreach at farmers markets and sites associated with community gardens.

When assessing the **Older Americans Act (OAA)** participant's diet adequacy, findings published by Mathematica, 2017 indicate that congregate meal participants generally had healthier diets compared to nonparticipants, both in terms of the adequacy of their usual daily nutrient intakes and the overall quality of their diets<sup>7</sup> while home delivered meal participants fared better with their usual daily nutrient intake. Without the OAA nutrition program the intake of fruits and vegetables would be diminished for older adults with high nutrition risk factors. Additionally more than 30% of OAA participants reported having diabetes which increased significantly compared to the 1995 evaluation. Using the **Create Your Plate** method for diabetes management, half the plate should be low carbohydrate or non-starchy vegetables<sup>8</sup> which is greater than the combination of 50% fruits and vegetables recommended for **MYPlate**.<sup>9</sup> With a goal to put more fresh produce on the plate, both seniors and nutrition providers are seeking solutions in the garden. To bring awareness for the many benefits of consuming local produce, the USDA is "encouraging families to meet, and buy from, the farmers and other vendors at their local farmers market" as they celebrate the 18th year of **National Farmers Market Week**, Aug. 6-12.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, providers are reaching out to inform older adults about the **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** to use available benefits to buy fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey and herbs from farmers' markets, roadside stands and community supported agriculture.<sup>11</sup> More recently **Double Up Food Bucks matches SNAP** (SNAP

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<sup>1</sup> [http://foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/files/Annotated\\_Bibliography\\_.pdf](http://foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/files/Annotated_Bibliography_.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S014362281100018X>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0143622814002112>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S014362281100018X>

<sup>5</sup> <http://whatworksforhealth.wisc.edu/program.php?t1=21&t2=12&t3=114&id=290>

<sup>6</sup> <http://civileats.com/2017/06/15/bringing-healing-meals-to-the-chronically-ill-in-california/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2017-07/AoA\\_outcomesevaluation\\_final.pdf](https://www.acl.gov/sites/default/files/programs/2017-07/AoA_outcomesevaluation_final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/planning-meals/create-your-plate/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/MyPlate>

<sup>10</sup> <https://farmersmarketcoalition.org/programs/national-farmers-market-week>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/overview>

stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program formerly known as food stamps.) is growing its capacity to increase spending on fresh fruits and vegetables with a financial benefit to local growers. Double Up is a national model which started in Detroit for produce incentives and is now active in 20+ states. The 2014 Farm Bill included \$100 million over five years to support the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grants program, a new national healthy produce effort informed by Double Up's strong track record in Michigan.<sup>12, 13</sup>

**The Fair Food Network** has translated the Double Up program into a practitioner toolkit available to groups interested in starting a Double Up program outside of Michigan. They can help you start a Double Up program in your region with the tools and templates you need to do it yourself. Email [info@doubleupfoodbucks.org](mailto:info@doubleupfoodbucks.org) for information about licensing our toolkit and brand materials and technical assistance throughout the process.<sup>14</sup>

**Find data** about your community and its SNAP households. Click on a State to find data by congressional district.<sup>15</sup>

**Nutrition.gov** is a USDA-sponsored website that offers credible information to help seniors and their families make healthful eating choices.<sup>16</sup> Check out spot light section featuring *Changes to the Nutrition Facts Label, NEW MyPlate, MyWins Tipsheets! USDA Food Composition Data Base<sup>17</sup> and 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To enhance your Nutrition education program, browse the **Life Cycle: Older Adults** section<sup>18</sup> and the **Nutrition Assistance Programs** which lists numerous publications<sup>19 20</sup>*

**Additional resources** can be found under **SNAP -Ed Connection-Nutrition for Older Adults**<sup>21</sup> including **State SNAP -Ed Contacts**<sup>22</sup> with resources like the ar-

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<sup>12</sup> [https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/FFN\\_DUFB\\_GroceryOverview\\_071817.pdf](https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/FFN_DUFB_GroceryOverview_071817.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.doubleupfoodbucks.org/about/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.doubleupfoodbucks.org/national-network/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/snap-community-characteristics>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nutrition.gov>

<sup>17</sup> <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nutrition.gov/subject/life-stages/seniors>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.nutrition.gov/subject/food-assistance-programs>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education-materials/nutrition-older-adults>

<sup>22</sup> <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/state-contacts>

title “Development and Evaluation of an Educational Display for Older Adults: Journey Through Health” ;<sup>23</sup> and Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP) overview.<sup>24 25</sup>

In an interesting cross cultural study, published in the UK, The Public Health site in England reports the connection between access to healthy foods and preventing malnutrition in older adults.<sup>26</sup>

In emergency situations the aging network is pivotal in linking older adults and those with disabilities to D-SNAP the USDA Disaster Nutrition Assistance Programs that provides safe and healthy food following a storm, earthquake, flood, fire and other disaster emergencies.<sup>27</sup>

**State Options Report:** SNAP’s statutes, regulations, and waivers provide State agencies with various policy options enable State agencies to adapt their programs to meet the unique needs of States.<sup>28</sup>

For additional information or have any questions, contact <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contact-us> . The following links provide detailed program explanations and information: [SNAP](#) , [Child Nutrition](#) , [WIC](#) and [Food Distribution](#) .

### **Resources to help make your garden and programs universally accessible to all people.**

“Everyone can be involved in community gardening, no matter their age or physical or mental ability! “

American Community Gardening Association

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.joe.org/joe/2015october/iw2.php>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/nsip/nutrition-services-incentive-program-nsip>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nsip/pfs-nsip.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/helping-older-people-maintain-a-healthy-diet-a-review-of-what-works/helping-older-people-maintain-a-healthy-diet-a-review-of-what-works> .

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-options-report>

Bring Mother Earth Within Reach, by Lori Hungate. Accessible Gardening  
<http://quest.mda.org/article/accessible-gardening>

The American Horticultural Society <http://www.ahta.org>

### **Aging in Place: Home Maintenance and Household Fun Gardening Adaptations for Senior Adults**

<https://www.uaex.edu/healthliving/aging/Household%20Fun%20Gardening%20andout%201.pdf>

**(google search : HYG-1642-94 Gardening with the Elderly Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet.)**

Chicago Botanic Garden Horticultural Therapy Services.  
<https://www.chicagobotanic.org/therapy>

Diabetes and Gardening

<http://www.diabeticlivingonline.com/healthbenefitsgardening?page=0%2C0>

Some gardens are being funded by the CDC under the National Program to Eliminate Diabetes-Related Disparities in Vulnerable Populations, to reduce health disparities associated with type 2 diabetes.<sup>29</sup>

Gardening with Disabled Individuals

<http://www.cityfarmer.org/disablegard67.html>

Senior Centers: Opportunities for Successful Aging  
By Beverly Beisgen, Marilyn Kraitchman, Springer Pub. 2003

**Community Gardens** have been planted in American cities since the 1890s to improve access to fresh produce with the first gardens appearing in Detroit, MI; Known as Pingree's *Potato Patch Plan*, the vacant land gardens feed 1,700 families almost 50% of the families on public relief during the economic depression of 1893.<sup>30</sup> Again in 2010 inspired by Former Mayor and Michigan Governor Pingree, take vacant city land has been inspired as Pingree Farms "where fresh produce can be picked, where farm animals roam and where new life is blooming." Both in the 1890 and again in 2010 in the initial phase of community gardening, a variety of groups, including social and educational reformers, along with those involved in the civic beautification movement, were responsible for their promotion. These gardens allocated on vacant land, began as a way to provide

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention/pdf/vulnerablepopulationsfactsheet.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> <https://pingreefarms.org/why-pingree-farms/>

technical assistance to unemployed workers and to reach out to families, elders in the neighborhood and youth.”<sup>31</sup>

During World War II communities planting Victory Garden’s became a way of life that encouraged people to grow food for personal consumption, recreation and to improve morale. These gardens in 1944 produced 42% of the nation’s vegetable supply.<sup>32</sup> During the 50’s and 60’s as farmland vanished from the outskirts of many cities, Americans were also on the move to work in manufacturing and service related jobs and brought their experience in farming to backyard gardens.

The 1970’s in the early years of the Older Americans Act (OAA) the nation again experienced a rebirth of community gardens. Refugees and immigrants during this decade like the Hmong; brought a love of farming from the mountains of Asia. What began as a communal garden to grow foods not often available in chain grocery stores, turned into a viable market for America’s interest in Asian vegetables to try new flavors and add variety.

**As the Centerpiece of the OAA**, the senior nutrition program has set the table for healthy aging for over 45 year’s; serving meals at congregate dining sites and delivering nutritious meals to older adults in their homes. Supported by the OAA, there is a combined desire to fight hunger, prevent malnutrition, reinvigorate interest in local farming, and consume more fresh produce for healthy aging while increasing opportunities for community engagement, socialization, nutrition education and giving back.

**Improving access** to fresh produce at congregate dining program locations and for home delivered meals is also incorporated into the OAA. While the country is witnessing a resurgence of community gardens, and a desire to consume more local foods, the gardens differ from earlier vacant lot gardens and are being planned as part of larger community outreach programs to bring people, services and resources together. In a recent survey for this article conducted by Stephanie Gjona, RD for the Area Agency on Aging 1-B in Southfield MI. Stephanie found that the Older Persons’ Commission located in Rochester Executive Director Renee Cortright stated that “seniors gardeners enjoy giving their extra produce to the congregate nutrition program on site”; while Teresa Bryant, Nutrition Services Coordinator for City of Farmington Hills reports using fresh herbs at the Costick Center which the Mayor’s Youth Council plant and maintain in the Senior Center’s courtyard area. The nearby Waterford Senior Center Nutrition Director, Donielle Fidler partners with the Township and School District community gar-

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<sup>31</sup> <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/MP906-4>

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.ats-engineers.com/Garden\\_Documents/Community\\_Garden\\_History.pdf](http://www.ats-engineers.com/Garden_Documents/Community_Garden_History.pdf)

dens. Waterford's program distributes fresh produce to the centers participants to take home. Located in the heart of a farming community in Monroe County, Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE) receives donated produce like green peppers, melons, tomatoes and cucumbers directly from farmers and Director Cheri Boron is able to flavor meals with the fresh produce from local farm's.

A new emerging community model is underway to target low income individuals in the city of Mt Clemens located in Macomb County, MI. Here leaders are formulating plans to bring neighbors together through a community garden on site with an incubator kitchen to launch budding entrepreneur's new products. Participants will receive specialized skills training with support from local 4-H club youth. A food pantry, social services and health outreach including nutrition education will also be located on site at what is being coined as the *Macomb County Family Resource Center*.<sup>33</sup> For more information contact NANASP member Nicole Urban at [nicole.urban@macombgov.org](mailto:nicole.urban@macombgov.org). Other community garden programs in the county include a raised garden bed built by township workers at senior nutrition sites. While producing food is the initial goal, at the center of these gardens is fellowship, shared stories, and friendship to strengthen the sense of belonging and hope for a healthy future as senior's plant seeds for the next generation to grow healthful skills.

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<sup>33</sup><http://www.macombdaily.com/article/MD/20160624/NEWS/160629736>