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**DOUBLE UP
FOOD BUCKS™**
A LIVEWELL COLORADO COLLABORATION

Double Your Food Stamp Dollars at Winter Markets With Double Up Food Bucks Colorado

Program Benefiting Low-Income Families is a Success in San Luis Valley Thanks to Funds From First Southwest Bank

DENVER — December 13, 2016 — As fall fades into winter, another farmers’ market season has come to a close for much of Colorado, but two markets in the San Luis Valley—Valley Food Co-op in Alamosa and Fourth Street Food Store in Saguache—are still open through the winter months and running [Double Up Food Bucks Colorado](#), a program that increases access to Colorado-grown fruits and vegetables for participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) while also benefiting local farmers and the economy.

Coloradans who receive food stamps are provided \$1.41 per meal or \$4.23 per day on averageⁱ, which can make it challenging to purchase fruits and vegetables. With Double Up Food Bucks Colorado, SNAP recipients receive up to \$20 in Colorado-grown fruits and vegetables when they use their SNAP benefits at participating farmers markets and select retailers. SNAP benefits are matched dollar for dollar to be put toward Colorado-grown, fresh fruits and vegetables, up to \$20 per visit. Initial funding for Double Up Food Bucks Colorado was awarded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant and the program is led by [LiveWell Colorado](#) and available in communities across the state. The program launched in July 2016 with over 40 locations across 20 counties.

[First Southwest Bank](#) provided funds that enabled three San Luis Valley food distribution centers to participate in the Double Up program—Alamosa Farmers’ Market, Valley Food Co-op, and Fourth Street Food Store. “The Double Up program is a win-win for all involved,” said First Southwest Bank CEO Kent Curtis. First Southwest Bank is designated as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), a certification from the United States Treasury for banks that provide services to underserved communities. “Because we’re a CDFI bank we are able to support a variety of important community programs in ways that most banks can’t,” Curtis said.

Liza Marron, Executive Director of the [San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition](#), can certainly attest to that. “First Southwest Bank has been an amazing partner in healthy food access work. The Double Up program truly wouldn’t have been possible in our community without their support,” she says.

“Double Up Food Bucks Colorado would not exist—much less be such a success—without the support of partners like First Southwest Bank and the San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition,” adds Wendy Peters Moschetti, director of food systems at LiveWell Colorado, a statewide nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by increasing access to healthy eating and active living.

While Colorado adults have the nation’s lowest obesity rate at 21.3 percent,ⁱⁱ adults with annual incomes below \$10,000 have an obesity rate of 29.2 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2013, 86 percent of adult Coloradans did not meet recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption.^{iv}

“Low-income members of our community sometimes perceive they are only able to afford cheap processed foods,” says Marron. “The Double Up program allows them to get and eat healthy, locally-produced fresh fruits and vegetables. Plus, all four participating markets saw an increase in revenue and SNAP clientele this year, and it’s been great for our local farmers too,” she adds.

At Alamosa Farmers’ Market, purchases from SNAP users more than doubled in 2016 (totaling \$3,704) compared to 2015 (\$1,501 in purchases), thanks to Double Up. “My family loved the extra incentive to use our EBT card at the farmers market. And being weekly customers allowed us to foster relationships with our community’s farms that will last long beyond our use of assistance,” said Joelle, a wife of a disabled Army veteran, mother of two boys, full-time student, and “lover of fresh veggies.”

Another participant and longtime San Luis Valley resident, Louisa, said, “What drew me to the Double Up program, and why I continued to use it, was that I felt more comfortable buying vegetables that I might not have otherwise bought. I found it easier to spend the bonus dollars on new things to try, such as bok choy, rather than the regular SNAP bucks (which I tended to spend on items that I already knew I liked), so it didn’t feel like a risky move.”

[Valley Food Co-op](#) manager Laura Cranson sees the Double Up program as a great opportunity for San Luis Valley residents to double their SNAP benefits and also provide healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables for their families. Valley Food Co-op is a member-owned Natural Food Co-op located in the Villa Mall in Alamosa and is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

[Fourth Street Food Store](#) has been working hard for many years to provide healthy food at affordable prices to low-income residents of Saguache County. “Our mission is to support local food producers, and to promote healthy eating,” says executive director Marge Hoglin. The Fourth Street Food Store is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information, including a complete list of Double Up Food Bucks Colorado partners and locations, please visit DoubleUpColorado.org.

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LiveWell Colorado (www.livewellcolorado.org) is a statewide nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by increasing access to healthy eating and active living. With the goal of eliminating health disparities and advancing health equity, LiveWell Colorado focuses its efforts on policy, environmental and lifestyle changes that remove barriers and increase access to healthy behaviors. Working in partnership with obesity prevention initiatives across the state, LiveWell Colorado aims to provide every Coloradan with access to healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity to make Colorado the healthiest state in the nation.

The San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition (www.slvlocalfoods.org) fosters an equitable local food system that restores the health of the people, community, economy and ecosystem. Several big projects contribute to the mission including the Mosca Valley Roots Food Hub aggregating and distributing local farm products to families, retail outlets and institutions; the Rio Grande Farm Park in Alamosa educating the community about organic agriculture and incubating new farmers while providing access to the river and running trails; Cooking Matters and Healthy Habits teaching people to cook healthy on a budget. 719-937-2319

First Southwest Bank (www.fswb.com) has been serving the San Luis Valley and Southern Colorado for more than 100 years. With seven branches in the area, the bank offers personal and business banking with an emphasis on businesses supporting rural communities. First Southwest Bank is active in the communities it serves aiding more than 40 local organizations.

Double Up Food Bucks was created by **Fair Food Network** (www.fairfoodnetwork.org) in 2009. It began at five farmers markets in Detroit, spread statewide to more than 150 sites across Michigan including grocery stores in one of the first pilots in the country, and has since become a model for healthy food incentives implemented by communities nationwide. Today, Double Up programs are active in 13 states with six more states launching efforts in 2016.

ⁱ USDA Food and Nutrition Service SNAP Program Data

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data [online]. 2015. Accessed April 2016 at <http://wwwdev.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Colorado Health Institute analysis of Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2004-2013).

^{iv} Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (2014). *Facts for Action: Chronic Diseases and Related Risk Factors in Colorado, Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in Colorado*. Accessed at: https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/DC_fact-sheet_Fruit-vegetables_Nov-2014_without-Appendix.pdf