



**Voices of
Double Up
in America**



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Helping more families buy fresh food from local farmers is a simple yet powerful idea.

In 2009, Fair Food Network started a small fruit and vegetable incentive pilot at five farmers markets in Detroit.

Double Up Food Bucks matches the value of SNAP when spent on fruits and vegetables, prioritizing some of those food dollars for local produce. (SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps.)

Double Up is a win/win/win: low-income families bring home more healthy food, area farmers gain new customers and make more money, and more food dollars stay in the local economy. Each of these has a positive ripple effect of benefits.

Since that initial pilot, Double Up has expanded from farmers markets to mobile markets, grocery stores, and other retailers across Michigan, becoming the first statewide produce incentive program. Today it is a national model for incentives that is being implemented by local partners in more than 20 states.

This year we sat down with some of the shoppers, farmers, market managers, store owners, business leaders, health professionals, and others that make Double Up a success in communities across America.

The result?

Real people, remarkable stories, and a deep sense of gratitude to do this work.

Here are the voices of Double Up in America.



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Shopper

As a young mom and graduate student, this shopper, now 33, used Double Up Food Bucks during her last year in school—stretching her food dollars at the farmers markets for fresh, nutritious produce for her family. Today, she’s a social worker in southeast Michigan and a Double Up volunteer who refers others with food needs to the program.

Here are her words.

I HAD LIVED OVERSEAS for many years and came back to my hometown area of Washtenaw County, Michigan, to pursue a graduate degree. I was just so thankful to end up here, where my mom was, so she could watch my son, who was two at the time.

My first year in the graduate program, I ended up on WIC. I was able to work part-time, for about 10 to 15 hours a week. But I couldn’t go to school and work full-time, so I turned in an application for SNAP my second year of school.

I received the most benefit from the SNAP program at the farmers markets. It not only gave us a chance to get more, healthier fruits and vegetables with Double Up Food Bucks, but it also gave us a chance to get out into the community.

Before I knew about Double Up, I didn’t shop at farmers markets much. I was a little bit intimidated at first, because you could either pay with cash or with tokens, which usually means that you are on some form of assistance. But there was a sense of friendliness. All the vendors were very welcoming and didn’t make me feel uncomfortable.

Going to the farmers market became such a wonderful routine for our family. Every Saturday morning, we jumped in the car, drove to a market, and purchased our items. The memories that I have from those Saturday mornings are really beautiful because I was able to get that food with my son and teach him how the process works and have him do a lot of the interacting with vendors. His social skills were growing, and it was just so cute, being able to look at our coins and figure out how it works.

During that first year of grad school, there was a lot of ramen, macaroni, whatever we could afford. Double Up definitely upped our awareness of the importance of eating fruits and vegetables.

One thing we started doing was going online and looking up recipes. Some weeks we would get corn;

the next week it would be green beans. We would talk about what a meal would look like with this one item and come up with a plan.

To this day, my son’s not a picky eater. I think that’s partly due to Double Up because he was introduced to and able to experiment with different fruits and vegetables from a young age.

So as much as it was a nutrition program for us, Double Up was also a learning program for me to be able to teach my son, “Hey, this is the stuff that’s going to help you stay healthier, help you feel better throughout the day.”

You can eat processed foods, and they’re good at the time, and they taste great at the time, but they don’t last very long. So that’s one thing that we realized: If we’re eating more whole foods, we can go longer in a day, and have more energy, and we don’t have to keep going back to the cupboard or getting snacks.

Double Up benefited all of us. I felt like I had more energy to play with my son. When you’re in grad school, you feel tired, but I was able to prepare meals and teach about doing so with fresh foods. I had the energy to take my son for a walk in the evenings in our community. We were able to have more of a holistic lifestyle, in every respect, because we had the energy, because we were eating healthier foods.

I volunteer with Double Up Food Bucks now. I saw it benefit our family, and I wanted to communicate that information to other people.

With Double Up, you’re not just helping individuals who need assistance and additional foods, you’re also helping a whole community of farmers, who need encouragement to do what they’re doing, and they make money off of this, too. That’s good.

Out of all the programs I worked with in the last couple of years, having been on assistance myself, **Double Up Food Bucks is the program that really benefited me in a positive way.**



Farmer

Located in west Michigan's farm belt, Green Meadow Produce is a 72-acre vegetable farm. Owner Robert Bylstra sells seven months of the year at the Muskegon Farmers Market where Double Up Food Bucks has made a substantial difference for his business. Robert is Amish and farms the land in Fremont with the help of his wife and two of his daughters.

Here are his words.

MY GRANDFATHER was a farmer and my dad was a farmer. At 22 years old, I had an elderly gentleman help me out getting started in farming. I loved it, so when I moved from Maryland to Michigan in '91, we just kept farming and milking cows.

In '95, we started with the vegetables and we do only vegetables now because that's where my heart is. I love plants. I love to watch things grow. I also like the idea of doing something where I'm feeding the people.

We grow about 80 different items. We have the full line of vegetables and greens: zucchini, yellow squash, cucumbers, pickles, watermelon, cantaloupes, sweet corn, tomatoes, peppers—lots of different varieties of peppers—and tomatoes. Then you've got cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and then a lot of different lettuces, spinach, and then all your herbs, chives, onions, potatoes.

We have about a 100-customer CSA. We sell a little bit here at the house just for the neighbors as kind of a service to the community, and then we do have a wholesale outlet that we might sell five percent to if we have extra. We sell 80 percent of what we grow at the farmers market.

The Muskegon Farmers Market is Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

We've been participating in Double Up Food Bucks ever since it started. We were doing the [EBT-generated, SNAP] tokens anyway, and if I look back at the records, the first year we only did about \$1,500 to \$1,700 a year. Once Double Up started, that went up about 400 or 500 percent. You know, up to \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year with Double Up.

Since we are homegrown certified at the Muskegon Farmers Market, meaning that we only sell what we grow ourselves, 100 percent of everything that we sell is usable with the Double Up tokens. About five to seven percent of the income from the farm actually is from Double Up. That's not huge, but if you're talking

about a couple hundred thousand dollars, then five percent is still pretty good.

We would lose something if it wasn't for the Double Ups. It's helping us make a living. Where the money actually goes to, whether for buying equipment or for workers, it helps us make a living. It really does. All farmers want to participate if they have fresh Michigan produce. I've never seen one who didn't want to.

That's what Double Up is all about: being able to get fresh Michigan fruits and vegetables, grown locally, that were picked within the last 24 hours, onto the customer's table when they usually would not be able to afford to. It costs a lot of money to feed a family, and so they come to the market and instead of having \$20 to buy vegetables they have \$40 to buy vegetables.

I think we've gotten more and different customers because of Double Up. Some people come to the farmers market only with EBT cards. I see a lot of regular customers with the Double Ups who would probably not be able to buy fresh Michigan produce without them.

It is a blessing for people who have children, especially moms who are trying to feed their children healthy food. I see some coming to buy things to can for the season—their tomatoes, pickles, potatoes. They're buying them mostly with the Double Ups that they've been saving to do that.

I have some elderly people too, some seniors, that come almost every week spending Double Up for their food. I mean without Double Up they would not be able to buy the fresh vegetables that they're buying.

It's a win-win situation because the customer is getting \$20 worth of free food so to speak, and yet we're getting paid for our fruits and vegetables that we grow. It also helps people be more aware of shopping local and getting more fresh fruits and vegetables. I don't know how you can make it better, really. It's one of the best programs I've ever seen.



Market Manager

With five years under her belt as Mt. Pleasant Farmers Market manager, Carol Moody has seen the benefits of the Double Up Food Bucks healthy food incentive program for the market, low-income shoppers, and local farmers.

Here are her words.

THE GREATER MT. PLEASANT AREA is a wonderful place to live. I've been in this community for 10 years. You have some city life, but you also have rural areas. And it's a college town.

The Mt. Pleasant Farmers Market started in 1973. We're a little over 40 years now. The main market is held on Thursdays. We have upwards of 50 vendors in the heart of the season. It really is a festive atmosphere.

The market serves everybody. We have people who work downtown, moms with small children, and lower-income shoppers who use food assistance benefits, whether that be SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks, or WIC Project Fresh. I think that's the cool thing about the market: Everyone has to eat, so we all need food.

Having Double Up at the market has been incredible. In 2014, our first year, we issued a little over \$6,000 in Double Up tokens. In 2015, we were up to almost \$8,000. It's continuing to grow. Those numbers right there tell me that the impact and the need are there.

Just having the market connects us to the community, but I think adding Double Up multiplies that. We're seeing a new influx of people coming to shop at the market because of Double Up. And they're telling their friends and co-workers. It's just helping get the word out about the market as a whole. Today, our market is much more user-friendly. It's welcoming to everybody.

Double Up has definitely impacted the consumer in that they're able to get fresh and local options, and they're able to stretch their dollar, so they purchase more than they would have been able to without it.

Double Up participants are also eating more fresh fruits and vegetables because of the program, and I definitely think they're trying different fruits and vegetables. The vendors are very good about explaining, "This is this particular fruit or vegetable, and this is how you prepare it." That's an education that you don't necessarily get when you shop at the grocery store.

When people are no longer on Double Up, they still continue to shop at the farmers market. The comment that I'm hearing mostly is that their SNAP amounts have been decreased and so they're trying to budget their money even more. They'll even be at the market at a week that they can't get Double Up tokens. They'll say, "My [SNAP EBT] card's going to reload next week. Then I'll be back for more."

The market is able to be vibrant because of programs like Double Up in that not only is it helping the shopper, but it's also increasing sales for farmers and vendors—sales that they may not have previously had. That's kind of two-fold, as the dollars are staying here in our community.

Vendors are definitely getting more customers and new customers, so they're supportive of Double Up, and appreciative, too. Some are starting to need to hire more staff. Several of them have been in the process of getting greenhouses going to have food available earlier on.

Our vendors are very giving. They recognize that times are tough for a lot of people, and they're passionate about being able to help where they can. In turn, Double Up shoppers are definitely happy to be supporting local farmers.

It's been a very simple process to implement Double Up at our farmers market. And Fair Food Network has done a great job in training and providing useful tools that have really helped our staff.

It's a point of pride personally just to be able to help people. When shoppers thank us, I feel so guilty taking all the compliments. I think, "We're so glad you're here and shopping and able to make healthy selections, and that this can help stretch your food budget." You know that they're getting fruits and vegetables that are picked either that day or the day before.

Being able to share this program with people is huge. My only regret is that we didn't do it sooner.



Grocery Leader

In the summer of 2015, Balls Food Stores launched a Double Up Food Bucks grocery store pilot in five of its Price Chopper stores in the Kansas City metro region. The pilot was so successful, it continued year-round using fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. Balls Food Stores has prioritized local sourcing, working with regional aggregator Good Natured Family Farms for years. Double Up builds on this history and helps Balls benefit from this support. Indeed, more than 70 percent of Double Up Food Bucks distributed was redeemed, increasing store produce sales by over 10 percent. There was an overwhelming amount of support for the program from SNAP and non-SNAP customers, cashiers, and store leadership. A \$2.9 million 2016 federal grant will help expand Double Up to 117 grocery stores and 68 farmers markets across Missouri and Kansas by 2019, including more than 50 Price Chopper stores. Balls Food Stores' Chief Operating Officer is Mike Beal.

Here are his words.

BALLS FOOD STORES is a locally owned third-generation grocer, started by Mollie and Sidney Ball in 1923. We operate stores in the Kansas City metro area under a number of different banners, principally Price Chopper and Hen House.

I started with the company right after college and managed stores. I did IT, I've been CFO, and now I'm chief operating officer.

We had five stores doing Double Up Food Bucks last year. This year we have 14.

Double Up gives us a unique position in the market to offer something to customers that's great for them and good for our partners, the farmers. Anything that we can offer that other grocers don't—we look for those opportunities.

All of our team is committed to Double Up Food Bucks. With any program, we've learned if you don't have buy-in from the highest levels, it's not going to work. Store directors are behind it. We go over the top to find ways to advertise it, to make it known. We've got signage throughout the store for customers.

Cashiers are the most important teammates we have in the company. What we learned with Double Up is that one-on-one interactions between cashiers and customers provide the best opportunity to let customers know they're building Double Up benefits. When our cashiers explain to a customer in the lane what they just earned and what that buys—there's a strong connection. The customer sees on their receipt what they can get with their Double Up benefits on their next shopping trip.

Some people think it's too good to be true. But cashiers are able to dispel that notion. And then if you

get customers sharing it through word of mouth in church groups or school groups, it spreads a lot faster.

I heard feedback from our customers to our cashiers last year that some families had switched to produce for snack items. The produce department is one of the healthiest places that you can shop. I don't know of anything negative that comes out of the produce department! You don't have to be a vegan to know you're helping your body with fruits and vegetables.

And Double Up is also great from a business perspective. We increased our local produce sales in participating stores 12 to 15 percent.

There's a movement in the country for local foods. All the industry talks about it. Produce that's grown in the area is fresher. As there has been more focus on healthy eating, local produce is an area where consumers are starting to pick up on it.

But that can be hard on low-income families. Double Up Food Bucks fits right into that movement to eat healthier and support local growers. It really helps those families who haven't thought about buying healthier products because they're just trying to stretch food dollars.

In the end, you're helping customers with their families and their lives by offering the program. If that's not reason enough to participate, honestly I question why you're in this business.

At the end of the day, for small grocers like us, being part of the community is one of the things the big boys can't do.

It's a win-win. There is no downside.



Shopper

Committed to eating well, Gail Lang, 65, borrows a car to make the 25-mile weekly trek from her home in Coweta, Oklahoma, to the farmers market in Tulsa. She navigates the compact Brookside Market on crutches, disabled as a result of an accident eight years ago. Living off Social Security and SNAP, Gail appreciates the Double Up Food Bucks program, which allows her to buy more of the locally grown, fresh produce she loves.

Here are her words.

I LIVE IN COWETA, which is a little town about 25 or 30 miles from Tulsa. It's a very, very small community so I go to Tulsa for main things like shopping. I borrow a car to go to the farmers market every time it's open: In the summertime or warmer months it's every week, and in the wintertime it's every other week.

About eight years ago, I was in a car accident, and I'm handicapped as a result of that. After the accident, I had a really hard time. I have a pride issue so it took me a couple of years to even get help from SNAP. But there are all different kinds of people that are receiving food assistance for all different reasons. There are older people. There are a lot of young people that have had difficulties or misfortune in their lives, and they're receiving assistance. Food assistance helps everybody, not just a certain group of people.

When I finally did go on it, it was wonderful to get the assistance. When I found out about being able to use the food stamps at the farmers market, I was thrilled. I love having fresh food and so being able to go to the farmers market is wonderful. The food is just so alive! Then I found out last year that I could double my food stamps up to \$20 a day using Double Up. **Double Up showed up at a great time in my life.**

The market I go to is called Brookside Market. It's an offshoot of the larger Cherry Street Market, and it's in the Whole Foods parking lot. It's a smaller market, and it's perfect for me because I'm handicapped and can't get around very well on crutches. The parking is very close by, and I can get everything I need. Sometimes it takes two or three trips to the car if I buy a lot of food, but the vendors that I go to are so sweet. They'll help me, or they'll send one of their kids to help me get back to my car.

I don't get that much at the grocery store anymore. My food budget is pretty much determined by the amount

of money that I get from food stamps. So there isn't a whole lot of money for food. But in terms of value for your food, if you're eating fresh food, you don't need to eat as much food as if you're eating a lot of processed food.

As a result of Double Up, I absolutely purchase and consume more fresh vegetables and fruit. I've also tried different kinds of vegetables that I've never had before. Every time I go to the market I learn something new.

I'm really committed to not just healthy eating, but buying local food to support the people who live in this area and support our local economy. Also, from an environmental standpoint, buying local is wonderful because you're not using all that fuel to transport food from halfway across the country or even from another country.

I love meeting the people who are growing my food and having a relationship with them—just knowing who they are, and knowing that by buying food from them I'm supporting their family, too. I buy from as many vendors as possible at the farmers market and try to connect with them. I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to do that, just to support growers in the area.

I just can't say enough wonderful things about the farmers market and the Double Up program. I tell other people about it all the time. I've even offered to give people rides to the farmers market. When I have the keys to the car to go, I'll just say, "This is what time I'm going. Do you want a ride?"

Double Up puts me in a situation where not only can I buy fresh food every single week, but I can buy more fresh food. It is just a blessing. I would love to see Double Up expanded so more people could participate in it.



Community Leader

While Iowa is an agricultural powerhouse, the state ranks dead last when it comes to fruit and vegetable consumption.¹ Incubated by local business leaders, the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative was founded in 2011 with the recognition that public health is equally a workforce and economic viability issue. For one of its first on-the-ground projects, it launched a Double Up Food Bucks pilot in 2016. Today, it has plans to expand Double Up to additional sites and Iowa's business leaders are fully on board. Jami Haberl is the executive director of Iowa Healthiest State Initiative.

Here are her words.

EVERYONE RECOGNIZES that you can't have a strong workforce without healthy people. And if we don't have a strong workforce, we're not going to have a strong economy. Ultimately, it is about the importance of having healthy, strong people who can carry out the tasks needed within our business economy to ensure that our communities and our families can continue to thrive and drive into the future.

Iowa Healthiest State Initiative launched in 2011 to address these issues. But prior to the official launch there was a lot of conversation among three business owners here in Des Moines: John Forsyth, CEO, Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, one of the largest health insurance companies; Doug Reichardt, retired CEO of Holmes Murphy, an insurance brokerage company; and Ric Jurgens, retired CEO of Hy-Vee, Inc., a large grocer based here in Des Moines.

They recognized the impact these issues have on bottom lines as well as productivity and the overall well-being of their employees.

Now these three businesspeople could have just kept doing things within their own walls, but they came together and formed the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative.

Today, we bring together organizations, businesses, and government agencies that are working to improve the health and well-being of Iowans. We serve as a facilitator of those conversations. That's where the public-private partnership comes together: We recognize that if we're going to make changes, it can't just be done by government agencies and it can't just be done in the private sector. How do we work together to support the long-term viability of our state, of our community, and even of our workforce?

We had multiple communities in Iowa that had heard about Double Up Food Bucks and the success it was having throughout the United States. They were contacting Fair Food Network directly and saying, "Hey, how do we do this here?"

We did a six-week pilot last summer and saw huge success. We worked with the University of Iowa on our evaluation and saw that people were already changing their behaviors: **They were starting to purchase healthier items than they have in the past.**

Our vision is to expand Double Up. We'll have 12 sites in 2017. Additionally, we have the opportunity to expand into grocery stores in the coming years, which will increase access to even more people.

A lot of the communities that are participating are very rural. Their world has changed significantly from when those communities were first founded. This probably isn't just in Iowa, but throughout the United States.

Double Up provides an economic development opportunity because the money stays within communities and with our local farmers. And it's helping citizens who need some additional assistance finding access to fruits and vegetables, which we know is critical.

That was a super important part of bringing in this specific program: It was addressing multiple issues. We'll continue to demonstrate how this program not only benefits those on SNAP but also benefits our local communities and our local farmers.

Being able to support local farmers and local community members obviously is a win-win.

It's hard not to want to see how you can bring Double Up to your community.

¹ 2015 Gallup Healthways Well-being Report



Farmer

Alex Pino's Revolution Farm is a collection of small, leased plots in Sante Fe County, New Mexico. An active member of the Northern New Mexico Young Farmers Alliance, Alex began farming nearly 10 years ago, selling his produce at area farmers markets. The New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association launched Double Up at a handful of markets in 2010. With a 2015 grant from the USDA, it is expanding Double Up to nearly 90 sites across the state including farmers markets, grocery stores, farm stands, mobile markets, and Community Supported Agriculture outlets.

Here are his words.

FARMING REALLY ENCOMPASSES what I enjoy doing.

I like the connection to the land. It's meaningful work. The land stewardship is something I have been drawn to more recently, protecting water and improving our soil.

We farm four leased properties that are all over Santa Fe County. Geographically, this is the desert. It doesn't seem like a place where you would have a strong agricultural community or even food production, but it's historically rich in agriculture. We have a plot in Pecos, one in Upper La Cienega, and two in the foothills southeast of Santa Fe. Each is no more than a half-acre.

Our farm is what a lot of growers refer to as a diversified vegetable operation, which means we grow a lot of vegetables and have found a niche with lettuce greens, salad greens, garlic, and some storage crops, like winter squash and radishes. We've got cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, too.

The farm has been slowly improving income every year. I would say 70 to 90 percent of our sales are farmers markets. We do one to three markets a week and sell pretty much 12 months a year, depending on production and how cold it gets. The other 10 to 30 percent is restaurants and a little bit of wholesaling.

I've been involved with Double Up Food Bucks for at least two years.

It's one of those programs that actually works in the sense that the consumer is getting a really good deal and the farmer is actually able to make a living.

I think a lot of people talk about food justice, and then they do not necessarily bring up the fact that the farmer still needs to make a living. I need to charge a certain amount for my food and figure out the cost of labor and everything else. Double Up is incentivized so that I'm still making what I need to, but then this person is getting really good, high-quality food, but they don't have to pay out of pocket as much as somebody who's well off.

We definitely have a big economic rift in Santa Fe. You've got people with second and third homes, who probably live here one or two weeks a year, and they're great customers. But the people who are actually living here and working here, laboring and eating and feeding, cooking in their kitchens, those are the customers who farmers need because they're going to stay here. And they're deserving of it just as much as anybody else.

It's important getting low-income people access to fresh local food. Generally, who you see at farmers markets are people with a lot of disposable income who are going to spend more on food. It's a conscious decision versus someone who's really poor who is just going to look for things that are a dollar or two at a convenience store. But healthy food—and not only healthy food, but fresh, local food—it's important to give low-income people access to that.

Double Up has contributed to my farm's income stream. People come by and spend five or ten dollars where they might have just spent that at a chain grocery store. Bringing that money to the farmers market, the consumer's going to get twice the value of their dollars, more nutrient-dense food, and food that has traveled fewer miles and is fresher. The program also indirectly supports buying new equipment or hiring more workers.

The positive effects are ongoing and can't even be really fully understood until maybe years down the line. It's the multiplier effect of locally spent dollars. Some research I saw shows that for every dollar spent at a local business, 45 cents are reinvested locally. For every dollar spent at a corporate chain, only 15 cents are reinvested locally. That's three times the local investment. With Double Up, people get double the money to spend on local produce, so that's six times the amount of money reinvested locally.

I don't know what the downside would be, honestly.



Supporter

Born and raised in greater Kansas City, Brenda Calvin, program officer at Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, is personally and professionally rewarded by her work improving community health. The foundation's support of a Double Up Food Bucks pilot in five grocery stores in Kansas City in 2015 was so successful, it helped leverage a \$2.9 million federal grant to expand the Double Up program to 117 grocery stores and 68 farmers markets across Missouri and Kansas by 2019—the first multistate healthy food incentive program in the country.

Here are her words.

GREATER KANSAS CITY is a mix of both urban and rural—oddly enough in pretty close space, which may be a little different from other cities.

I think the perception outside of Kansas City may be that the Midwest is typically farmland and so we should have access to more food, but we're really growing more corn and less fresh produce that folks would typically consume. There are quite a few food deserts in the urban core and also in the rural areas despite the fact that we have a high amount of growers. I believe we have a higher proportion of diet-related illnesses, above the national average.

The goal of the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City is to eliminate barriers and promote quality health for the uninsured and underserved. Our service area is three counties in Kansas and three in Missouri, so we serve a bi-state area. There is a mix in terms of income level, food systems, and needs and availability of food in greater Kansas City.

It's been proven that increased access to fresh produce helps to reduce incidences of chronic disease. And so our goal is to make sure that fresh produce is available for folks. As much as we can do to not only make sure that it's available, but also to educate, we believe that will help prevent the onset of chronic disease or stop it from progressing and getting worse.

Double Up Food Bucks allows us to increase access to healthier, nutritious food, but also to make sure that food is affordable.

Over the long term, this will help improve outcomes for those who really need it the most and face the most barriers in terms of accessing fresh produce.

We're trying to level the playing field and make sure that there's equity and just food access. The cost on the front end, even including incentives, versus the larger cost that we would pay on the back end is well worth

the investment. This is one small piece that we can do versus letting chronic disease manifest.

The Double Up pilot here was offered in five grocery stores in the areas of highest need in our city. We had greater-than-anticipated response from consumers at all of the grocery store locations, and we were able to get really good feedback about the products that were being offered. It's just a great system for educational purposes and ease of use for the consumer.

The local grocer, Price Chopper, was excited about the program and is excited to expand. They feel like they have the relationship with their consumers because they've gotten such positive feedback. And consumers feel that Price Chopper is really understanding their needs, that there's a true partnership, and that there's true investment in their communities.

The pleasant surprise for us is that this has turned out to be a great model of multi-sector and multi-dimensional collaboration.

It was not just partners in the healthy communities' field, but partners and funders outside of the field, with stakeholders such as small businesses, state agencies, and a large-scale collaborative of growers. I think that has been the biggest surprise—to have commitment from some of those nontraditional partners and to see the large-scale interest in this type of project and understanding of the health benefit in the long term.

I actually grew up in greater Kansas City and in one of our counties of highest need, which is Wyandotte County. So to see this type of investment from partners from multiple sectors, to know that the message is spreading, to see benefits of investing in this field, in this work, in this education overall, and to be in a position to have exponential impact, is probably the greatest personal and professional reward I can receive.

FAIR FOOD NETWORK is founded on the belief that vibrant local food systems can create health and economic opportunity for all. A national nonprofit, we work with a diverse network of partners and pioneer solutions that support farmers, strengthen local economies, and increase access to healthy food—especially in our most underserved communities. Central to this mission is building programs that create on-the-ground impact, serve as replicable models, and inform public policy.

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