

Prescription for Health 2020 Outcome Report



Prescription for Health was generously funded by Saint Joseph Mercy Health System in 2020 with additional financial support. Washtenaw County Health Department coordinates the program. Prescription for Health connects the **medical system** and the **food sector** by creating a relationship between clinic staff, their patients, and local farmers markets. Health care providers assign “prescriptions” to their patients to eat more fruits and vegetables. These prescriptions can be “filled” at local farmers markets.

Participants received **\$100** in tokens or online credit to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets, as well as nutrition education and support. Participants also worked with Community Health Workers to set health goals.

During 2020:

- **412 patients** from 13 different health clinics and agencies serving low-income individuals participated.
- The age range of participants was **4 months to 94 years old**, with the average age being 43 years old.
- A total of **\$23,516.32** was spent on fruits, vegetables, and fruit/vegetable plants/seeds, improving participants’ access to healthy foods and supporting the local food system.

Thank You!

The Prescription for Health (PFH) program is an important asset and resource access point for many throughout Washtenaw County. The [Michigan Food Environment Scan](#) identifies Prescription for Health as a successful community food intervention in the area of health care focused efforts.¹

Thank you to Saint Joseph Mercy Health System, our clinic and farmers market partners, PFH participants, and PFH program staff for your dedication and commitment to providing, implementing, and utilizing PFH amidst the COVID-19 pandemic!

How the Program Worked: COVID-19 Pandemic Version

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 PFH program adapted to a remote operation. Clinic staff referred patients to the program based on food access difficulties, chronic disease risk, and interest. PFH program staff enrolled those referred by mailing an enrollment packet containing program information, special events information, healthy eating and living goal setting instructions, market safety guidelines, and \$100 of paper tokens (or information on accessing their \$100 online credit) to spend on produce. As a supplement to the mailed enrollment packet, an overview video detailing the PFH 2020 program season was available on the PFH website. Participants “filled” their prescriptions at participating local farmers markets and farm stands.

Since 2013, Community Health Workers (CHWs) have been formally integrated into the program to provide more peer social support, decrease barriers, and reduce costs. Though there was no PFH table staffed with CHWs at the farmers markets in 2020, the CHWs called participants to offer support remotely. During calls with participants, CHWs assisted with goal setting; offered support and reminders; provided referrals to community resources and other healthy eating resources, such as SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks, and Pandemic-EBT. **The COVID-19 pandemic has been an isolating experience for many people throughout Washtenaw County, but these regular phone calls with CHWs offered a chance for participants to experience connection and support from peers in their community.**

Special thanks to our partners:

Aid in Milan, Faith in Action, Hope Clinic, IHA Milan Medical Center, Michigan Medicine Chelsea Health Center, Michigan Medicine Regional Alliance for Healthy Schools, Michigan Medicine Ypsilanti Health Center, Packard Health, St. Joseph Mercy Academic Internal Medicine Clinic, St. Joseph Mercy Academic OB/Gyn Center, St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea Diabetes Education, St. Joseph Mercy Neighborhood Family Health Center, UNIFIED – HIV Health and Beyond, Chelsea Farmers Market, Nemeth Greenhouse & Farms, Pittsfield Township Farmers Market, Ypsi Area Online Market, Ypsilanti Farmers Market – Depot Town, and Zilke Vegetable Farm.

How the Program Worked: Special Events

Special events encouraged participant engagement and provided support, especially due to the remote nature of the 2020 PFH program. Additionally, the special events provided healthy eating and living information and education. A variety of special events were created, so all could participate, regardless of their ability or access to resources.

The 2020 PFH program special events were Bingo, an A to Z Scavenger Hunt, and videos on various topics including: summer and fall fruits and vegetables, mental health impacts on physical health, mental health resources in Washtenaw County, kid-friendly recipes with cooking demonstrations, staying active at home and during the winter, the health benefits of different colored fruits and vegetables, and fiber.



Remote special events were created to engage participants and promote participation in the 2020 PFH program. Pictured above are two pictures sent by participants as part of the A to Z Scavenger Hunt special event. For “Z”, participants were asked to draw a zebra eating their favorite fruit. Two zebras are pictured eating participants’ favorite fruits.

Post-Program Survey Feedback Results

PFH program staff sent a survey link to participants who consented to receive text and email updates. 4% of participants (17) completed the survey.

Participants reported that the CHWs were helpful, supportive, and dedicated to the program and to helping people. Participants also shared that the PFH program was excellent, made a difference in participants becoming healthier, supported mental and physical health, and provided participants with the means to access fruits and vegetables. **Many participants expressed their gratitude for being able to participate in the program and mentioned this program was a blessing for them.**

Participants also discussed how the PFH program impacted their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants reported the program allowed them to access good food and good fellowship during the pandemic, helped them learn versatile ways of eating fruits and vegetables and how to substitute protein sources in meals, positively impacted their mental and physical health while allowing them to stay home, and gave them peace of mind about having money to buy fruits and vegetables. Many participants also reported they were happy they had the opportunity to shop at outdoors farmers market locations and that they felt safe doing so.

Prescription for Health Economic Impact

Participants spent a total of:

- **\$9,012** at the Ypsilanti Farmers Market – Depot Town
- **\$5,420** at the Chelsea Farmers Market
- **\$4,831** at the Pittsfield Township Farmers Market (an additional **\$1,260.20** at the Pittsfield Township Farmers Market Online MarketPlace Shopping)
- **\$1,550.12** at the Ypsi Area Online Market
- **\$1,443** at the farm stand partners in Milan

¹Laing, S., Kato, C. Kutch, L., & Fluegeman, S. (2019). Michigan Health Endowment Fund Food Environment Scan: A project completed by MPHI for the Nutrition & Healthy Lifestyles Program. Okemos, MI: Center for Health Communities, MPHI.