

Prescription for Health 2021 Outcome Report



PRESCRIPTION *for* HEALTH

Prescription for Health was generously funded by Saint Joseph Mercy Health System in 2021 with additional financial support from multiple partners. 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 receive **\$100** in tokens to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets, as well as nutrition education and support. Participants also work with Community Health Workers to set health goals.

During 2021:

- **440 patients** from 13 different health clinics and agencies serving low-income individuals participated.
- The age range of participants was **1 year to 95 years old**, with the average age being **45 years old**.
- **48% of participants** (209) lived in zip codes 48197 or 48198.
- A total of **\$22,677.47** was spent on fruits, vegetables, and fruit/vegetable plants/seeds, improving participants’ access to healthy foods and supporting the local food system.

“Prescription for Health has been so helpful in allowing me to eat healthy and make better food choices.”

– 2021 Program Participant

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 PFH program continued to operate as a remote program in 2021. 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, participant engagement materials, healthy eating and living goal setting instructions, and \$100 of paper tokens to spend on produce. 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 2021, the CHWs called participants to offer support remotely. During calls with participants, CHWs assisted with goal setting, offered support and reminders, and 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.**



How the Program Worked: Monthly Mailings

Monthly mailings to participants encouraged participant engagement and provided support, especially due to the remote nature of the 2021 PFH program. The materials mailed were centered around healthy eating and/or living and consisted of a monthly PFH newsletter which highlighted a fruit or vegetable in season (including its health benefits and suggestions for storage and preparation), a goal tracking sheet, a health education handout, and a corresponding activity.

To further promote engagement, participants had the opportunity to complete the monthly goal tracking sheet and corresponding activity to obtain an entry into an end-of-season drawing for a gift card to a grocery store or farmers market. Participants were encouraged to participate every month to maximize their number of entries. There were 114 total submissions.

Additionally, videos created during the 2020 program season remained accessible on the PFH website for participants. These videos provided healthy eating and living information and education.

Prescription for Health Economic Impact

Participants spent a total of:

- **\$10,701** at Growing Hope's Ypsilanti Farmers Markets
- **\$4,054** at the Pittsfield Township Farmers Market
- **\$3,851** at the Chelsea Farmers Market
- **\$3,598** at the farm stand partners in Milan
- **\$473.47** at the Ypsi Area Online Market

"The Prescription for Health program continues to offer awesome blood pressure reduction benefits for me. I had emergency gall bladder surgery recently and once again having access to fresh, ripe produce sustained my health. Thank you immensely for this program."

- 2021 Program Participant

Special thanks to our partners:

Aid in Milan, Faith in Action, Hope Clinic, IHA Milan Primary Care, 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, Growing Hope's Ypsilanti Farmers Markets, Nemeth Greenhouse & Farms, Pittsfield Township Farmers Market, Ypsi Area Online Market, and Zilke Vegetable Farm.



Post-Program Survey Feedback Results

PFH program staff sent a survey link to participants who consented to receive text and email updates. 5% of participants (20) completed the survey.

Participants reported that the CHWs were helpful, supportive, friendly, and encouraged them on their goals. Participants also shared that the PFH program was excellent, provided helpful resources, made a positive difference for their health, helped them understand the health effect and importance of fruits and vegetables, and provided them with the means to access fruits and vegetables. **Many participants expressed their gratitude for being able to participate in the program and shared how much they love it.**

Participants also discussed how the PFH program impacted their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants reported the program enabled them to afford and access fruits and vegetables (especially fresh, local, and high-quality produce), while providing social connection. Additionally, participants indicated they felt healthier, enjoyed trying new foods, and gained knowledge on ways to consume produce. 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.

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.