Two Birmingham farmers markets now accepting food stamps

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BIRMINGHAM, AL (WBRC) - For the first time in Alabama food stamp recipients can use their EBT cards at certain farmers markets. The first one opened Thursday afternoon at Lawson State Community College.

Main Street Birmingham launched a food stamps benefits program at the Southwest Fresh Market on Thursday, May 9. The new system allows farmers market customers to use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at both the Southwest Fresh Market and East Lake Farmers Market this summer.

More than $56,000 families in Jefferson County are helped by SNAP, a federal food assistance program.

"We have corn, watermelon, collards, cabbage, white potatoes, tomatoes, and oranges," said Richard Wilson, a farmer from Marengo County. "We [are] accepting the vouchers and I think that’s a boost for the business," said Wilson.

Wilson and other farmers will accept food stamps for the first time and he's hoping it will put some extra cash in his pocket. Sam Crawford with Main Street Birmingham says it's a win-win situation for farmers and area residents.

"The regional farmers have now access to a market they did not have before," said Crawford. "The residents have easier access to healthy foods. They don't have to leave the community and especially the elderly or people low income who don't have transportation to leave the community to buy produce."

It's hard for Alethea Goodins to walk so she's thankful the farmers market now takes her food stamps.

"I bought two sandwichess, 2 bags of chips, 2 waters, sunflower seeds," said Goodins. "It truly is a blessing because you can't really go nowhere else to use your food stamps at a farmer's market to get stuff like this."

Main Street Birmingham says customers who want to use their SNAP benefits for fresh fruits and veggies can go to the entrance to the farmers markets to purchase Market Bucks. Then, they can redeem those Market Bucks at individual stands within the farmers markets.

The Southwest Fresh Market is located at the corner of Wilson Street and Elmyra Drive on Lawson State's campus. The East Lake Farmers Market is located on the corner of 2nd Avenue South and 78th Street South.

The farmers market is a partnership between Main Street Birmingham, Lawson State Community College, and the Mayor's Office of Economic Development. For more information go to www.mainstreetbham.org.
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