

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE  
*Changing Lives*

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**When you support  
Extension,  
limited resource  
households access  
local produce to  
improve their  
health.**



*Vouchers were issued in \$1 and \$5 denominations for redemption at the Letcher County Farmer's Market.*

## **Letcher County Extension Partnership Contributes to Improved Health**

*The FARMACY Project issues a prescription of local produce from the Letcher County Farmers Market to eligible household due to health condition and/or economic status.*



## Letcher County Farmer's Market has increased sales by 650% over 3 years with \$18,000 of sales attributed to the FARMACY program in 2015.

Letcher County face economic and health challenges. Thirty percent of families live in poverty with over 7,500 people receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services Data Book, 2012). Among the adults in Letcher County, 75% are overweight and 44% of adults are obese. There is a prevalence of 16% diagnosed with diabetes, 47% with hypertension, and only 8% report eating the recommended intake of fruits and vegetables (BRFSS, kentuckyhealthfacts.org).

The Letcher County Extension Service partnered with the Mountain Comprehensive Health Corporation (MCHC), Letcher County Farmer's Market, and other community partners to create the FARMACY program. The goal of the program was to improve the health of individuals and families with diabetes. Pregnant women and individuals diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes were eligible regardless of income. Patients diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, obesity, or hypertension were eligible if they fell below the 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

MCHC clinical providers wrote prescriptions for "OK FARMACY." The eligibility assistance counselor collected health data (i.e. BMI, blood pressure, glucose) and verified eligibility. Eligible patients received vouchers based on the number of household members. Vouchers could be redeemed at the Letcher County Farmer's Market for locally grown produce. For example, a family of four received \$28 per month.

During 2015, 162 household qualified for the program and 132 redeemed vouchers. The participants reported financial benefits improved their access to nutrition needs, with 89% reporting improved health. Twenty-six percent of participants reported improved blood pressure. Other health improvements included: weight loss, reduction of glucose and BMI. Sixty-four percent reported canning food for the winter.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Letcher County (ANR) has provided educational programs for producers to increase quality, variety and quantity of fruits and vegetables available at the Farmer's Market. Since 2013, the number of vendors has increased from 6 to 32 and sales have increased



*Extension has advised Letcher's County Farmer's Market vendors on crop diversification, value added products, and marketing.*



*MCHC issues FARMACY prescriptions and monitors health. Eighty-nine percent experienced improved health with 26% of participants improving blood pressure.*

from \$6,000 to \$39,000. Over \$18,000 of the 2015 sales was from the FARMACY vouchers.

Over \$200,000 has been budgeted by three healthcare companies to be used for the FARMACY program in 2016. Letcher County's limited resource population will increase access to local produce to improve their health while growers increase confidence to grow more fruits and vegetables during a time of economic challenges in southeast Kentucky.