

## **Minneapolis Farmers Market Unveils EBT Program**

June 29, 2010 (MINNEAPOLIS) -- It's been a ten-month journey to this week's roll-out of EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) at the Minneapolis Farmers Market, but Communications Director Sandy Hill is grateful to see the program get underway this Thursday, July 1, at the Market's historic red sheds on Lyndale.

“The addition of EBT accessibility is a positive way to welcome more community residents into the market,” said Hill. The Market's North Loop neighborhood has been underserved by supermarkets, leaving residents without limited access to nutritious, locally grown fruits and vegetables. “We're pleased that the community can use EBT benefits for fresh produce,” added Hill, “These consumers will have greater access to local and affordable healthy food options, resulting in positive health impacts.”

Planning for the EBT program began in 2009 in discussions with Minneapolis' Homegrown Initiative. The City is continuing its support. Beginning July 15, the City of Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support and Blue Cross Blue Shield's Center for Prevention will provide a one-to-one match of up to \$5 for the purchase of EBT-eligible items.

Of the 250 members of the Central Minnesota Vegetable Growers Association, which operate the Market, 93 have been trained. Hill expects this number to grow as the season progresses.

About The Minneapolis Farmers Market:

The Central Minnesota Vegetable Growers Association (CMVGA) is a member-based non-profit association with over 200 members. Our members directly market their fruit, vegetables, and farmstead products at the Minneapolis Farmers Market to consumers. The CMVGA manages, educates and assists in improving production methods and direct marketing strategies for its members through related partnerships with the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Grown Promotional Board. The CMVGA members use a wide variety of sustainable growing practices ranging from greenhouse and hydroponic to fields of fruits and vegetables, along with improved practices for the production of farmstead goods. The CMVGA is dedicated to the success of its farmers markets, the future of small farms and agriculture, and most importantly, providing quality to customers.