

## **Project Encourages Workers to Eat Fresh Fruits and Veggies**

### ***Issue***

People who eat generous amounts of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthful diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including stroke and perhaps other cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer, according to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. Because they are low in calories and high in fiber, fruits and vegetables can help control weight.

- Only 21 percent of South Carolinians eat the recommended number of servings of fruits and vegetables each day
- About 75 percent of Americans eat too little fruit, 95 percent eat too few vegetables, and 64 percent eat too much saturated fat, according to the report *Healthy People 2010*
- South Carolina experienced \$1.1 billion in obesity-attributable medical expenditures in 2003
- Over 64 percent of SC adults are overweight or obese

### ***Intervention***

SC DHEC partnered with the Seeds of Hope Farmers Market Project, which serves SC small family farmers by providing opportunities for them to sell their fresh produce. This is a project of the SC Christian Action Council. This weekly fresh produce market of locally grown fruits and vegetables was held in the parking lot of a worksite occupied by DHEC, as well as other businesses. The market was held Thursdays mornings in June and July, and was made possible by the following:

- Organized volunteer coordinators in 3 DHEC units to recruit staff to work on market days. Volunteers set-up and took down the equipment (tent, tables, chairs, etc.), weighed, received the payment/made change for purchases and assisted customers
- Cross-program cooperation made the difference: Tobacco Division provided use of a large portable sun-shade; Certification and Licensure provided folding tables; Community Health loaned chairs; Bureau Director provided lumber for the sign and put it up; Emergency Management Services temporarily stored the equipment which kept it closer to the market location; staff recycled grocery bags for use at the market

### ***Impact***

This multi-agency work place effort was one strategy to close the gap between actual and recommended intake of fruits and vegetables. It actively supports the Produce for Better Health Foundation's "National Action Plan" to promote health through increased fruit and vegetable consumption.

- Improve access to healthy, fresh foods by bringing them to the workplace. Over forty five percent of responders to a survey of market customers reported increasing their intake of fresh fruits and vegetables during the summer and the market months
- Support agency vision of "healthy people living in healthy communities" and the goal of "increase support to and involvement by communities in developing healthy and environmentally sound communities"
- Support SC small farmers and SC grown products
- Provided a community service by involving local residents in the market
- Improve relations with co-located businesses by including them in the market

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