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## Food Hero campaign gives \$2 vouchers for all kinds coming to farmer's market

ANDY FIELD The News-Review Jul 29, 2017



Nola Lynch, 4, of Portland trades in a ticket from Food Hero for a peach from Robin Kendall of Drain at her fruit and vegetable stand, My Father's Garden, at the Umpqua Valley Farmers Market in Roseburg on Saturday.

MICHAEL SULLIVAN/The News-Review

Children browsing the fruits and vegetables at Saturday's Umpqua Valley Farmers Market in Roseburg had an extra incentive to make healthy choices.

Organizers with Oregon State University Extension Service and United Community Action Network's AmeriCorps program were handing out \$2 coupons for buying vegetables and fruit to every child who attended the market. Their booth was part of the eight-week Food Hero campaign, which serves to encourage children to eat healthy food.

The program is also going on at the Canyonville Farmers Market. It continues there until Wednesday, and in Roseburg until next Saturday.

The program received grant support from the Oregon Food Bank FEAST program. Funds help reimburse farmers for accepting the coupons.

“We are encouraging kids to eat more fruits and vegetables, to try new fruits and vegetables and to also get more families shopping at the farmers market,” said Sara Runkel, small farms and food systems manager for Douglas County OSU Extension.

On Saturday, halfway into the event, 42 kids took a voucher from the Food Hero booth. Runkel also offered free healthy recipes, and every time a child picked up a coupon, she asked him or her to write a thank you card to a farmer at the market.

“It’s nice to be recognized for the hard work that we do, and they get to enjoy it,” said Lucy Valadez, co-owner of Valadez Organic Produce, who had received four thank-you cards halfway through the event. “With the Food Hero program, they learn how everything is grown.”

Valadez said they get more kids buying their fruit than usual thanks to the program. She said often kids who come to their stall will point out their vegetables as being in the Food Hero recipe for the week.

One of the most popular items for the children to use their coupons on were the strawberries at Big Lick Farm. The farm booth had received 10 coupons from the children around halfway into the event. The children would line up, and when seeing the \$3 price for a basket of strawberries, would begin asking their parents to chip in a dollar. Co-owner Susie Porter said, if parents asked, she and her husband would provide a smaller batch worth the \$2 ticket.

Eryka Schlichting, 9, was one of the children who used her ticket on the strawberries. She placed her basket of strawberries inside her mother’s large box of fruit.

“I picked them because I’m in love with strawberries,” said Eryka.

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## Andy Field

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