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Massachusetts*

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Press Release

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Weymouth Farmer's Market will partner with Union Point to continue Farm to Family program

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Weymouth, MA – Mayor Robert Hedlund announced today that the Union Point and Weymouth Farmer's Markets will team up to continue the town's Farm to Family program, where by families that receive federal food assistance can use their SNAP benefits for a "market match" up to \$20 a day at the Union Point Farmer's Market. The same match dollars will be offered to Weymouth Food Pantry clients who do not qualify for federal assistance but who meet the pantry's low-income qualifications.

"This is a great partnership for both farmers markets and the community as a whole," **said Mayor Robert Hedlund.** "The Farm to Family program has gone the extra mile for the last two years to help families stretch their dollars and access fresh, local food. Now residents will enjoy the same essential benefit at the Union Point Farmer's Market."

"At Union Point, our focus is building an inclusive, thriving and welcoming community", **said Kyle Corkum, LSTAR Managing Partner.** "Bringing the important services the Weymouth Farmers' Market has been providing to local residents for years, while at the same time benefiting local farms and vendors, is a win-win for everyone."

The Union Point Farmer's Market will run 10:00 am to 1:00 pm every Sunday starting June 4th, with the exception of the Independence Day holiday weekend. The Weymouth Farmer's Market will have a table and tent at Union Point where families can use the

Farm to Family program. Shoppers will see many of the same vendors from the Weymouth Farmer's Market. The Union Point Farmer's Market will end October 15th.

The Weymouth Farmer's Market's Farm to Family Program helped families in need purchase more than \$5,000 in food last summer. Nearly half were match dollars funded by a grant through the Joy in Childhood Foundation. **Cas Casados, director of the Weymouth Food Pantry, said** 230 families have been helped through the program.

"Keeping our neighbors from going hungry is an absolute necessity," **said Casados**, "but it's also important to fill people's bellies with nourishing food that will give them the nutritional resources to stay awake in class, take that extra shift if they need to, or stay active longer. For that, locally-grown food can't be beat. We're excited for another year of the Farm to Family Program."

In 2015, the Town partnered with the Weymouth Food Pantry to increase its market's capacity to accept non-cash payments, such as SNAP benefits and debit cards. Shoppers at the Weymouth Farmer's Market could swipe their EBT and debit cards to purchase wooden tokens, which acted as cash at the market. These same tokens will now be available and act as cash at the Union Point Farmer's Market. Tokens from previous Weymouth Farmer's Market seasons have no expiration dates, so families can use these for purchases at Union Point, as well.

The Weymouth Farmer's Market is organized and operated by the Town of Weymouth. This operational model is unique for farmers markets, since in most communities, including Braintree, Hingham, and Quincy, citizen-based nonprofits take on the responsibility. Town staff ultimately volunteered their time for the market. For 2017, staff will undertake a long-term planning process that will help the market become more sustainable and return renewed and stronger in 2018.

"Our objectives right now include recruiting a dedicated Market Manager or facilitator and finding an operational model that will sustain the market in the long term," **said Administrative Services Coordinator Nicholas Bulens**. "The best thing for the market and the community, however, would be a nonprofit citizen organization to take on the initiative with the Town. This is the model common to the most vibrant, thriving markets across the state, and ultimately makes for a stronger community."

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