



# WIRELESS EBT PROJECT

## March 2013 Newsletter



### From the Editor – Tracy Penick

Total Transactions	EBT Transactions	Total Sales on Wireless
<b>2012 Total: 43,754</b>	<b>7,016 (16.0%)</b>	<b>\$958,564</b>
<b>2013 Totals:</b>		
January 376	44 (12.0%)	\$ 9,916
February 446	58 (13.0%)	\$ 11,723
<b>YTD</b>		
<b>2013 Total 822</b>	<b>102 (12.0%)</b>	<b>\$ 21,639</b>

#### February 2013 Facts:

Total sales for February this year were lower than February 2012 (\$11,723 compared to \$14,733). The number of EBT transactions were also lower in 2013 than 2012 (58 compared to 75). For January 2013, there were a total of 446 wireless transactions compared to 714 in 2012.

In February 2013, there were 197,947 Food Assistance/EBT families in Iowa. \$48,720,459 in benefits were issued in February to these families.

#### Here are other interesting facts regarding February sales:

There were 19 farmers who were active in February and 11 of those had EBT sales. The farmers with EBT transactions were:

- ❖ Grossman Meats (11) Preston
- ❖ Yoder's Natural Farm (9) - Bloomfield
- ❖ Fitkin Popcorn Co. (8) Cedar Falls
- ❖ Allen's Grove Greenhouse (7) Donahue
- ❖ Oak Hill Acres (7) Atalissa
- ❖ Iowa Food Cooperative (5) Des Moines
- ❖ Sawyer Beef (4) Princeton
- ❖ Blooming Acres Farm (3) Fairfield
- ❖ Barb's Garden & Pantry (2) Long Grove
- ❖ Fertile Dirt Farms (1) Hills
- ❖ Iowa Orchard (1) Urbandale

Congratulations go out to Grossman Meats for having the highest amount of EBT transactions and to Iowa Food Cooperative for having the highest amount in EBT sales. Great job to both!

### Letter from the USDA

It has come to our attention that some of the farmers that participate in the Wireless EBT Project have received a letter from the USDA. The letter says that you haven't redeemed any SNAP benefits for at

least three months and you need to respond within 10 days or your FNS # will be deactivated, which means you could no longer accept EBT.

Farmers should not have received this letter. So if you received this letter I need to hear from you at once. I am working with the Iowa USDA representative to assure that none of the farmers that received this letter will have their FNS # deactivated. Please let me know at once if you received a letter!

## **Are you ready for the 2013 Farmers Market season?**

It is very hard to believe that the 2013 Farmers Market season is just around the corner. We have been working this week on bringing up the April machines. Below are some things that you will need to do before your first market day:

- Charge both of your batteries before your first market.
- Run a credit and a debit transaction.
- Call Kim or Tracy to run an EBT transaction.
- Check your paper supply. Farmers with lower volume of sales should have 1-2 rolls of paper. The farmers with large volume of sales should have 3-5 rolls of paper.
- Make sure you know where your charger cord and your download cords are.

Every year it seems like we have some machines that have don't EBT loaded on them. That is why it is extremely important to run a test EBT transaction before you go to market as this gives us time to troubleshoot your machine.

## **Time to update the Farmers Market brochure**

Just a reminder that the deadline to submit your farmers market information is March 29<sup>th</sup>. Please either e-mail, fax or call Tracy or Kim so that you will be added to the 'Bringing Farmers Markets and Food Assistance Together' brochure.

## **New Signage for the Wireless EBT Project**

The signs have been ordered! DHS is very excited about all of the new signage for the Wireless EBT Project. The new signs are very bright and colorful and will hopefully catch the eye of the customers when they are shopping at the farmers markets. As soon as the signs are finished, we will send those out to all of the farmers who placed an order. If you ordered an A-Frame metal sign, we will let you know when those have arrived so that you can pick that sign up. Our goal is to make sure that you have your new signs before the market season begins.

## **Farmer Spotlight – Country Market – Tammy Donovan**

One comment that DHS received in the farmer survey this year was one farmer was amazed at some of the farmers EBT sales. This farmer also had some questions for those farmers with high EBT sales. So I tallied up all of the 2012 EBT sales and asked the top 10 farmers in EBT sales to answer some questions. My hope is that the information that these farmers provide will help you to promote EBT or give you some new ideas to try at your farmers markets.

This month we are spotlighting Tammy Donovan of Country Market.

Tammy does not attend any farmers markets but has a farm stand located at 15<sup>th</sup> & Hamilton Blvd. in Sioux City. Country Market has a great selection of fresh vegetables, amazing peaches, jams and fall items like pumpkins, apples, gourds and painted pumpkins.

They promote EBT by using their signs on the sides of their tent and the tripod sign, word of mouth is great, and they always have their machine charged and at the stand every day so that their customers can rely on it. Their strategy is no different than trying to bring any other cash paying customer in because it's all money in their market. They treat people the same regardless of how they pay for their veggies. Tammy and a wonderful lady run the stand and remain cheerful and helpful, regardless of the temps (some days a big challenge). Tammy believes the combination of fresh, delicious produce and a show of appreciation to their customers is the key.

Country Market grows about 30 acres of produce and they grow 90% of their own stuff. What they don't grow themselves, they guarantee just the same as if they had grown it. They feel responsible for the flavor and freshness just the same. Country Market grows mostly chemical free except for sweet corn because they haven't found anything effective to keep the worms out. Organic doesn't seem to be a big thing in their area, but they like the fact that their grandkids can come out and pick a tomato and eat it with no worries about pesticides.

Another reason that their stand does well is they provide great hours for working families. They are open Monday thru Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. On Sunday they are open from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Country Market wants their customers to rely on them for fresh, good produce with fair prices and they rely on their customers to keep them in business.

Comment from Tammy, "I thank you all for the effort you all put into helping us small farmers to have the use of the machine and for dealing with our crazy calls when we are frustrated and confused with technology."



Country Market

## **Any changes to your contact information?**

With the beginning of the 2013 Farmers Market season right around the corner it is a good time to make sure that DHS has all of your information current and up to date. All address, phone number, business name, e-mail address or bank account changes need to be reported to DHS as soon as possible! It is extremely important that all of your contact information is up to date so that DHS and your wireless machine provider can get in contact with you when necessary. Also, it is very important that the receipts from your wireless machine print out your correct information. If you have any changes, please contact Tracy or Kim so that we can get your information current and up to date.

## **Help Us Recruit New Farmers!**

It is that time of year where we need to be recruiting new farmers for the Wireless EBT Project. Do you know of any farmers in your farmers market that would benefit by being a part of the Wireless EBT Project? If so, please let Tracy or Kim know so that we can reach out to them.

## Paper for your wireless machine

Just a reminder that DHS supplies the paper rolls for your wireless machines. It is imperative that you use thermal paper or it could ruin your machine. Please do not use any other type of paper in your wireless machine other than the paper that DHS supplies. If you are running low on paper, please give either Tracy or Kim a call.

## Reminders:

1. Remember that you cannot ring up a sale for another vendor. You could lose your Food Stamp certification and be terminated from the Wireless Project.
2. Since you are paying for the commercial transaction fees, be sure to keep track of what you are paying so you can use those expenses as a tax deduction.
3. You cannot set a minimum purchase amount. If an EBT household wishes to purchase \$.50 in onions, you do need to process the transaction. Same for any debit or credit transaction.
4. Hot foods and hot drinks (cocoa, coffee, and tea) cannot be purchased with SNAP EBT benefits.
5. If your Nurit machine quits working, you need to call TMS Tech Support at 1-888-848-6825. This is the phone number on the side of your machine. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.
6. If your VeriFone machine quits working, you will need to call Jason Butts at 402-574-7086 or Chris Shanahan at 402-574-7016. If you can't get the problem solved, please give Tracy a call.
7. Call Kim if you need any supplies such as paper rolls, power cords, or battery.
8. The second battery that we provide to you was purchased by DHS. If you ever need to return your wireless machine, be sure to keep one battery, carrying case and signs.
9. **Charge your batteries before market.** You should always have a charged battery, ready to go for market. If a battery is not holding a charge, contact Kim for a replacement.
10. Please make sure to keep the original box that your machine came in as it contains the Sim card, which is needed to identify your machine if you have to call TMS.

## Help Desk

We are here to help you!

When you have questions about:

- Participating in the Wireless project or reimbursement questions? Call Tracy Penick at 515-281-4935.
- What you can sell to EBT customers, or being authorized to accept EBT? Call USDA/FNS at 515-421-3248.
- Food Assistance eligibility? Call Kari Lind at 515-281-7000.
- Supplies – call Kim Jones at (515) 281-5410.