



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

Mass in Motion New Bedford Awarded Healthy Food Fund Grant

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation Grant Will Allow Expanded Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables from Local Farms

New Bedford, Massachusetts –Mass in Motion New Bedford (MiM NB) was recently chosen as one of 20 organizations in New England to receive a Healthy Food Fund grant from the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation. This funding, totaling \$29,095, will allow MiM NB to implement a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program at two New Bedford public housing sites in partnership with two local farms, to deliver fresh fruits and vegetables directly to residents over 20 weeks beginning next summer. The grant is renewable for two years.

“We are so excited about this project,” says Kim Ferreira, MiM NB director. “Because affordable and reliable transportation can be a challenge for many New Bedford residents, this program cuts out that piece – residents won’t have to worry about driving to get fresh and local vegetables, the produce will be dropped off right at their door.”

“In New Bedford, we’re leading the charge when it comes to recognizing our challenges and mobilizing to address them at the community level through collaboration and creativity. With each new initiative Mass in Motion undertakes, they move our city in a healthier direction. We’re lucky to have outstanding leadership at Mass in Motion, and such willing and able partners across the region dedicated to making New Bedford a healthier place,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

Modeled after a program between the Mass Department of Transitional Assistance, the Greater New Bedford Community Health Center, and Project Bread, MiM NB has partnered with Apponagansett Farm and Round the Bend Farm, both located in Dartmouth, to create a weekly, affordable CSA share that can feed up to a family of four.

“We believe that everyone should have access to high-quality, locally grown food regardless of where they live or their economic status,” says Susan Murray, co-owner of Apponagansett Farm.

CSAs are a share of the farm's weekly harvest; the size and price are pre-determined, and participants pay for the share up front at the beginning of the season, and receive the vegetables and fruits that are harvested that week. Through this program, participants are able to pay monthly instead of once at the beginning of the season, and a portion of the share will be subsidized by the Healthy Food Fund grant, while the recipient will pay for the other portion, either with SNAP benefits or cash.

Each week, the farmers will deliver the CSA shares to participating families and individuals living at Ben Rose and Presidential Heights; sites that house a Resident Coordinator. These coordinators play a critical role since they will assist in recruiting families for the shares. (The United Way of Greater New Bedford recently funded a Resident Coordinator position at Ben Rose, whose role will be enhanced through this grant.) In addition to food delivery, MiM NB will coordinate healthy cooking demonstrations and other educational workshops to encourage residents and community members in general, to eat more fresh and local fruits and vegetables.

"Knowing that transportation has always been a barrier for many of our residents, we are excited to be able to offer a program that eliminates that issue, bringing fresh produce right to our residents' doors," says Steven Beauregard, Executive Director of the New Bedford Housing Authority. "We are excited to be a part of this initiative that not only delivers fresh, local produce directly to our families, but also educates them on how to prepare, cook, and store the vegetables."

MiM NB also built in funding to take participating families on a visit to each farm so participants can see, one-on-one, exactly where their food is coming from. Ultimately, the goal will be to create a CSA share that is the right size and price that residents will purchase the full share without the need for a subsidy, and still allowing the farmer to make a profit.

In their press release, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation President, Karen Voci said, "While we are supporting community growers and markets on the supply side, we are also helping programs that build consumer demand for health food...That's great for our health, for our environment, and for our economy."

Ashley Brister, produce farmer at Round the Bend Farm would like to meet that demand. "For over a decade, Ashley has been involved in farming and has dreamed of creating more space for healthy food access in New Bedford, as the team at Round the Bend believes healthy and nutritious food is medicine for every cell of your body and that everyone deserves access to healthy food," says Desa Van Laarhoven, RTB Director.

Starting in 2015, the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation began expanding its focus on preventing childhood obesity to help families and communities eat healthier by launching the Harvard Pilgrim Health Food Fund. This grants program is aimed at supporting health food initiatives that increase access to fresh, healthy, and whenever possible, local food for families and communities in all of Harvard Pilgrim's five markets across the region.

Mass in Motion is a statewide movement led by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health that helps local communities increase opportunities for residents to eat better and move more in the places they live, learn, work, and play.

You can learn more about MiM NB by visiting their website at massinmotionnewbedford.org or liking their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/massinmotionnewbedford>

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