

STARTING OCT. 18 people will be able to use food stamps at the Kingston Old Stockade Farmer's Market as part of a new electronic food stamp program.

Farmers Market, nonprofit group team up for food stamp program

BY ROBERT FORD

Ulster County Press

Kingston's Old Stockade Farmers Market and local nonprofit The Queens Galley, which helps low-income individuals and families to "stretch their resources in the ways that they will have the greatest economical, nutritional and flavor impact," are teaming up to kick off a new program for those who use food stamps.

Beginning Saturday, Oct. 18, those who take part in the federal EBT, electronic food stamp program, will be able to purchase fresh fruit, vegetables, meats and baked goods at the Farmers Market.

"Saturday is Make-A-Difference Day and we thought it would be a great day to kick off this program," said Diane Reeder, executive director of The Queens Galley.

In the past, farmers and other food merchants that sell their products at the Farmers Market could not take food stamps but now under the new EBT scrip system they will.

"It was like Oliver Twist," Reeder said. "Those with food stamps could only look at the produce at the Farmers Market but they could not buy"

That changes on Oct. 18.

Individuals and families that have EBT cards can take them to the Farmers Market's manager table, and tell those manning the table how much they plan on spending on items at the market, Reeder said. Their EBT cards will be swiped through a machine and money from their food stamp ac-

count will be electronically transferred into the Farmers Market account. Wooden tokens in \$1 increments will be issued to the people who will then be able to buy items from the food vendors who, at the end of the day, will cash them in with the Farmers Market manager.

"Farmers and produce growers are 100 percent behind this," Reeder said. "This program will enable food stamp users to finally be able to buy fresh, locally grown food at the Farmers Market and it will help them sustain and support local growers. This is a wonderful opportunity for food stamp users."

And, while the program is kicking off on Oct. 18 as part of Make-A-Difference Day it will be in effect for every Old Stockade Farmers Market there after. This year's market closes on Nov. 18 and reopens next May Reeder said.

In addition to being able to purchase food items at the market on

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executive director, The Queens Galley.

Oct. 18, The Queens Galley will be low income families or individuals on hand to help pre-screen families and individuals who are eligible for the federal food stamp program, Reeder said. "We help them through the process of apply for food stamps and filling out all the paperwork."

To be eligible for food stamps an individual must be working and make a certain amount, or physically unable to work; those who are physically able to work but either won't or don't are not eligible for the program.

Reeder said food stamps help

put food on their table, and with the Farmers Market they will be able to put nutritious, fresh, locally grown produce on those tables.

Last year, Reeder was recognized by Bill Gates and a recipient of the "Start Something Amazing" Award by Microsoft for her work in use of technology in the nonprofit sector. The Queens Galley is located at 254 Washington Avenue at the Washington Manor in Kingston.