

**Welcome to the 3SquaresVT E-Update**  
**September 2009**  
**Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger**

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**1. 3SquaresVT Participation Hits 79,000**

As of July 2009, 79,000 Vermonters—more than 1 in 8—receive 3SquaresVT benefits, bringing \$9.5 million into the state each month. Participation has been steadily rising throughout 2008-2009 with many factors contributing to the increase, including the downturn in the economy, expanded eligibility, and increased outreach and media attention.

**2. Back to School – 3SquaresVT Links to Free School Meals**

As children head back to school this fall, advocates are reminded of the important role school meals play in providing children with the nutrition they need to learn. Now is a good time to work with local schools to remind families that if they apply for and receive 3SquaresVT benefits, they get the added benefit of free school meals—both breakfast and lunch—for their children. All they have to do is show the school their 3SquaresVT approval notice to be signed up. For more information about the school meals program and [the application](#), go to [www.vtnohunger.org](http://www.vtnohunger.org).

**3. Double Your Money at the Farmers’ Market!**

The **Harvest Health Coupon Project (HHCP)** is a coupon incentive project designed to encourage more 3SquaresVT customers to utilize their EBT cards at farmers’ markets. HHCP improves the ability for limited-income Vermonters to shop at farmers’ markets by doubling the purchasing power of 3SquaresVT benefits. For every dollar in 3SquaresVT benefits used, customers will receive another dollar in Harvest Health coupons, up to \$10 per market visit. With 79,000 current 3SquaresVT participants receiving over \$9 million in benefits each month, HHCP will

also benefit farmers with increased revenue. The project is being piloted from August through October 2009 at five markets around the state:

- Brattleboro Area Farmers' Market
- Bellows Falls Farmers' Market
- Capital City Farmers' Market (Montpelier)
- Old North End Farmers' Market
- Winooski Farmers' Market

The project is administered by Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) and is generously funded by the Wholesome Wave Foundation and the Ben and Jerry's Foundation. For more information about the project contact Jean Hamilton at NOFA-VT, [jean@nofavt.org](mailto:jean@nofavt.org). See also [market locations and hours of operation](#).

#### **4. Your Input Needed For the 3SquaresVT Outreach Toolkit**

The 3SquaresVT Outreach Toolkit was created by the statewide 3SquaresVT Work Group to ensure that outreach agencies working with low-income Vermonters have promotional materials containing accurate and up-to-date information about the program, and to prevent the spread of misinformation in the process. Toolkit items are added, removed or updated to reflect current data and policies, and to adapt materials to the changing needs of eligible Vermonters and local service providers. See all current toolkit materials [here](#).

The Work Group invites you to share your feedback on the usefulness of materials in the 3SquaresVT Outreach Toolkit by completing this short online survey. Click on this link to begin:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=EF\\_2bD3r2hZE6RqjijY4QdXA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=EF_2bD3r2hZE6RqjijY4QdXA_3d_3d)  
*Please respond by Monday, September 14<sup>th</sup>.*

#### **5. More Focused Efforts to Help Hungry Seniors**

This past July, the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger worked with the Vermont Department for Children and Families and community partners across the state to bring together advocates, policy makers, and state administrators, to discuss the challenge of increasing senior participation in 3SquaresVT. 12% of Vermont's seniors are food insecure, but only 34% of those eligible for 3SquaresVT currently participate. The group discussed many strategies to improve participation, including more targeted outreach and marketing efforts as well as program improvements such as a simplified application for seniors. Stay tuned for progress on these initiatives throughout the year.

#### **6. New Phone Number with Interactive Voice Response Coming to DCF Soon!**

The Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division will launch a new phone system and number for 3SquaresVT and other benefits programs at the end of September. E-Alerts will be sent in advance to service providers that will include the exact launch date and the new 800 number. We encourage service

providers to fill out the online survey that will be sent two weeks after the launch or to email us with feedback on the new system at any time. If you have any questions, please email Ann Janda at [ajanda@vtnohunger.org](mailto:ajanda@vtnohunger.org).

## **7. October 1<sup>st</sup>: 3SquaresVT Calculation Changes**

On October 1, 2009, 3SquaresVT will determine eligibility based on the 2009 Poverty guidelines, rather than 2008 guidelines. The standard deduction for households will also change slightly for calculating benefits. These changes will be posted on [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) by September 30, 2009.

## **8. Now Available: Translated Outreach Materials for 3SquaresVT**

Information about 3SquaresVT, including basics, eligibility, the recent program expansion, how to apply, and questions and answers, is now available in six additional languages at [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com).

These include: [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Bosnian](#), [Swahili](#), [Somali](#), [Nepali](#), and [Burmese](#). Click the name of a language to access the translated materials, or [click here for a link to the entire list](#).

*[www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) is a collaborative website of the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and the Vermont Department for Children and Families.*

## **9. Health Message in the Media: [“Good Food Helps Make Good Health”](#)**

Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup> the Rutland Herald’s “Health Talk” column featured an article about 3SquaresVT, [“Good Food Helps Make Good Health”](#). In response to the article, the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger received several requests for information and [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com) received new visitors and requests for applications. Reach out to your local media outlets and ask them to cover the issue of hunger and the programs that help alleviate hunger in your community. For more sample articles, go to the [resource library](#) on [www.vermontfoodhelp.com](http://www.vermontfoodhelp.com).

## **10. Reminder: 3SquaresVT Participants Must Report a Change of Address**

Please remind clients and communities that it is the responsibility of the participant to report a change of address in order to keep 3SquaresVT benefits. Department for Children and Families Economic Services Division (ESD) cannot forward mail if a participant has moved and has not reported that change. If ESD does not receive a participant’s review packet or other needed materials because the participant has moved and did not receive the materials, their benefits can be terminated. They may be required to reapply as a new applicant. Please share this reminder about proactively reporting a change of address to ESD with your colleagues and clients; this [handout](#) may help to spread the word.

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THE VERMONT CAMPAIGN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER develops programs and advocates policies to prevent hunger and promote good nutrition for Vermont's families. We rely on the support of our members, donors, and business partners to implement our programs and initiate action. For more information on how to become a member or to donate, visit: [www.vtnohunger.org](http://www.vtnohunger.org).

We are pleased to provide you with this 3SquaresVT E-UPDATE. Periodically, we will be sending out these updates to keep you informed of events, legislation, and news about 3SquaresVT. If this e-update was forwarded to you, please consider signing up to receive it directly by emailing [angela@vtnohunger.org](mailto:angela@vtnohunger.org). If you would like to be removed from this e-update mailing list, please email [angela@vtnohunger.org](mailto:angela@vtnohunger.org).

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