

Your Health Matters

FRESH PRODUCE IN FOOD DESERTS

When the Harvest Hauler truck rolls into Grace Lutheran Church in Wellsville this week, Harold Thompson is likely to be first in line. Thompson says he plans his menus around the produce available on the truck and is happy and excited to have it bring fresh produce to his community.

Like a Farmers' Market on wheels, the Harvest Hauler mobile market is loaded with fresh fruits and vegetables grown by local farmers, and is a welcome sight to residents in this rural "food desert" where there is little to no access to fresh produce.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warn that "limited access to affordable, healthier foods is one factor that may make it harder for some Americans to eat a healthy diet and could negatively affect their health."

The Montgomery County Health Department partners with the Lincoln County Health Department to bring the fresh produce in on the Harvest Hauler. The program began in 2017 with a grant from the US Department of Agriculture, and all the produce on the truck comes from local farmers in Lincoln, Warren, Pike and Montgomery counties.

When the truck arrives in Wellsville, volunteers unload tables and spread fresh produce out for local residents to purchase. People look over the selection, staff offer suggestions on how to choose, use and store each type of produce. They share ideas for preparing the produce using simple recipes.

The truck will visit Wellsville every Tuesday from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm through November this year. People who can't get to Wellsville can call (636) 528-6117 ext 409 to place an advance order and have it delivered to a location closer to them. The truck will make deliveries at Peoples Savings Bank in New Florence, in Montgomery City, and at other agreed upon locations. Produce will be delivered in a basket that should be returned when the next order is delivered.

Project Manager Rebecca Grutsch says she'll offer giveaways, raffles and incentives to continue to draw customers throughout the growing season. She probably won't need to offer Mr. Thompson any incentives – he will already be there when the truck arrives, ready and waiting!

To learn more about the Harvest Hauler and the other public health programs and services we offer, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth.org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. We love taking care of your family, and work every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. ■



Linda Harman