

Voices of Double Up in America

Shopper



Committed to eating well, Gail Lang, 65, borrows a car to make the 25-mile weekly trek from her home in Coweta, Oklahoma, to the farmers market in Tulsa. She navigates the compact Brookside Market on crutches, disabled as a result of an accident eight years ago. Living off Social Security and SNAP, Gail appreciates the Double Up Food Bucks program, which allows her to buy more of the locally grown, fresh produce she loves.

Here are her words.

“ I LIVE IN COWETA, which is a little town about 25 or 30 miles from Tulsa. It’s a very, very small community so I go to Tulsa for main things like shopping. I borrow a car to go to the farmers market every time it’s open: In the summertime or warmer months it’s every week, and in the wintertime it’s every other week.

About eight years ago, I was in a car accident, and I’m handicapped as a result of that. After the accident, I had a really hard time. I have a pride issue so it took me a couple of years

to even get help from SNAP. But there are all different kinds of people that are receiving food assistance for all different reasons. There are older people. There are a lot of young people that have had difficulties or misfortune in their lives, and they’re receiving assistance. Food assistance helps everybody, not just a certain group of people.

When I finally did go on it, it was wonderful to get the assistance. When I found out about being able to use the food stamps at the farmers market, I was thrilled. I love having

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fresh food and so being able to go to the farmers market is wonderful. The food is just so alive! Then I found out last year that I could double my food stamps up to \$20 a day using Double Up. Double Up showed up at a great time in my life.

The market I go to is called Brookside Market. It's an offshoot of the larger Cherry Street Market, and it's in the Whole Foods parking lot. It's a smaller market, and it's perfect for me because I'm handicapped and can't get around very well on crutches. The parking is very close by, and I can get everything I need. Sometimes it takes two or three trips to the car if I buy a lot of food, but the vendors that I go to are so sweet. They'll help me, or they'll send one of their kids to help me get back to my car.

I don't get that much at the grocery store anymore. My food budget is pretty much determined by the amount of money that I get from food stamps. So there isn't a whole lot of money for food. But in terms of value for your food, if you're eating fresh food, you don't need to eat as much food as if you're eating a lot of processed food.

As a result of Double Up, I absolutely purchase and consume more fresh vegetables and fruit. I've also tried different kinds of vegetables that I've never had before. Every time I go to the market I learn something new.

I'm really committed to not just healthy eating, but buying local food to support the people who live in this area and support our local economy. Also, from an environmental standpoint, buying local is wonderful because you're not using all that fuel to transport food from halfway across the country or even from another country.

I love meeting the people who are growing my food and having a relationship with them—just knowing who they are, and knowing that by buying food from them I'm supporting their family, too. I buy from as many vendors as possible at the farmers market and try to connect with them. I am



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grateful for the opportunity to be able to do that, just to support growers in the area.

I just can't say enough wonderful things about the farmers market and the Double Up program. I tell other people about it all the time. I've even offered to give people rides to the farmers market. When I have the keys to the car to go, I'll just say, "This is what time I'm going. Do you want a ride?"

Double Up puts me in a situation where not only can I buy fresh food every single week, but I can buy more fresh food. It is just a blessing. I would love to see Double Up expanded so more people could participate in it."