

## **Health Bucks Give Food Stamps Clients a Hand with Fresh Produce**

HRA and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will help put more fruits and vegetables on the table for food stamps recipients this summer and fall by giving out 100,000 Health Bucks – up from 15,000 two years ago. Health Bucks are \$2 coupons that can be used to buy fresh fruit and vegetables at local farmers’ markets. For every \$5 food stamps clients spend at participating farmers’ markets, they will get one \$2 Health Buck. There are 49 farmers’ markets throughout the city participating in the program. Health Bucks will also be available from 170 community organizations who work in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty and low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption.

“Health Bucks are a great opportunity for food stamp recipients to buy more fresh fruit and vegetables for their families,” said Seth Diamond, Executive Deputy Commissioner of HRA’s Family Independence Administration, which oversees the Food Stamps Program. “I’m glad we can partner with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to make Health Bucks more available to food stamp recipients throughout the city.”

Health Bucks not only provide more food to food stamps clients, they also promote a healthy diet – fruits and vegetables are often expensive, and lower-income consumers do not usually get enough. Health Bucks also benefit local farmers by encouraging food stamps recipients to shop at farmers’ markets. Begun as a pilot program in the Bronx in 2005, the Health Bucks program has expanded each year, helping more and more families eat healthier. The program is a cooperative effort from HRA, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and community organizations throughout the city. Health Bucks are available while supplies last during the 2009 farmers’ market season: July 1-November 15.