



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary: 2017 Survey Results.....	3
Introduction.....	4
History of the Go Fresh Mobile Farmer’s Market Program .....	4
Goals.....	5
Sales Summary .....	6
Description of 2017 Survey.....	7
Survey Results.....	7
Customer Demographics .....	7
Reach and Frequency.....	9
Health .....	11
Food Security .....	14
SNAP Healthy Incentive Program (HIP).....	14
Opportunities .....	14
Conclusion.....	15
References .....	15

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- City of Springfield Department of Elder Services
- Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
- Beacon Communities
- Appleton Corporation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: 2017 SURVEY RESULTS

The Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market (Go Fresh) is a food access project that serves food insecure households of Springfield for the last seven years. Go Fresh is an initiative of the Live Well Springfield Coalition, which leads a community movement to support healthy eating and active living in Springfield, Massachusetts. Access to affordable healthy eating options is an important social determinant of health. A diet rich in whole fruits and vegetables is associated with lower blood pressure,<sup>1</sup> reduced risk of heart disease,<sup>2</sup> preventing Type 2 diabetes,<sup>3,4</sup> and preventing some types of cancers.<sup>5</sup> This project targets communities where we can make an equitable contribution to improve health outcomes.

The Go Fresh project has become an expected community resource for high quality produce, social opportunities and nutrition education: **all customers said they would shop there again next year.** The project outcomes are tracked each year by an end of the year customer survey that asks questions about health, social behavior, and food insecurity. We also look at sales data and our ability to reach low income residents. Our efforts provide residents the opportunity and annual incentives to use SNAP benefits, as well as education on the new SNAP Healthy Incentives Program this year, resulting in destigmatization of the use of this particular source of food assistance and its access to healthy eating..

Results of the 2017 survey show that Go Fresh serves as a food access point for folks who are food insecure. Over half of survey respondents said that, in the past year, they sometimes or often worried food would run out before they were able to buy more. Results also show increases in fruit and vegetable consumption, reach to low income Springfield residents, and community connection.

The 56 survey respondents represented 14 neighborhoods in Springfield as well as various towns outside of Springfield. Respondents of the survey reported that they use the Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market frequently and purchase food to feed more than one person: at least 126 people were fed from shopping done by those 56 individuals. This suggests that the **reach is over double the number of shoppers.** Most shoppers reported having chronic health problems. **Fruit and vegetable consumption increased by about one serving per day on average** after respondents started shopping at the market. Socialization and poor mental health are often correlated in older adults (34% of survey respondents were over 60 years old). Go Fresh provides an opportunity for people to socialize; **55% reported that they look forward to the market in order to meet new people,** to go with friends or neighbors, or just to get out of the house. Finally, 94% in this year's survey and over three quarters (80%) from 2016 were interested in buying produce from the mobile market over the fall and winter, suggesting there is an opportunity for Go Fresh to extend its season. Ninety-six percent of those surveyed said they would like to see these activities continued, suggesting that **activities currently organized in partnership with the Go Fresh Mobile Market, especially food demonstrations, were well received as ways for community members to connect and increase their knowledge of healthy food preparation.**

## INTRODUCTION

The Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market (Go Fresh) project is a not-for-profit collaboration. The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts (PHIWM) manages the project and the YMCA of Greater Springfield oversees all of the day to day operations. The partners advising the project include city departments, three local farms, the Springfield Housing Authority, and a nonprofit community loan organization. With its mobile setup, the market is a key access point for low income residents, bringing fresh produce to multiple locations in Springfield from July through October. Go Fresh provides access to fresh, affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate, locally grown produce to low income communities in Springfield, Massachusetts.

### History of the Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market Program

The Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market in Springfield has been offering a variety of affordable, locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables for the last eight years. It has expanded to include a variety of stops, a greater variety of produce, and has built partnerships to expand the customer base and create a sense of community.

This was possible with the support of partnerships with other local organizations, like the Caring Health Center and a variety of housing development, and funding from a range of sources, including sponsors, federal grant funds, and foundation funds.

The 2016 season saw major enhancements to the Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market when it received a donated bus from PVRTA; and, with funds from PeoplesBank and STCC Foundation, was able to retrofit the bus. The bus retrofit has made shopping easier, allowing for greater variety and the ability to keep produce cooler longer.

**Figure 1. Go Fresh Mobile Market Timeline**



Springfield based organizations like PHIWM and City of Springfield Department of Elder Affairs helped strengthen relationships with market sites and secure funding to support the project. With support from the Go Fresh Advisory Team and dedicated PHIWM staff, the many Go Fresh needs have been covered to sustain the project.

The Go Fresh Advisory Team, which PHIWM convenes, raises funds to support operations, upgrade the market vehicle, expand market promotion, and establish annual community engagement efforts such as nutrition education and SNAP match. In 2017, Go Fresh was also a partner in the statewide Department of Transitional Assistance Healthy Incentive Program (HIP), providing an automatic rebate to SNAP recipients upon purchase of produce at partner farmer’s markets, mobile markets, farm stands, and CSA Shares. Through PHIWM leadership, Go Fresh has also organized educational workshops in various community centers, organized access to community based nutrition education, and led efforts to assess the impact of the project.

## Goals

Go Fresh aims to:

- serve residents who live in ‘food deserts\*’ by improving access to fresh, culturally responsive, locally grown fruits and vegetables,
- provide social interaction for elders, and
- create a sense of community in the neighborhoods that we serve

All of the produce at the market sites has been competitively priced to be similar to, or less than local supermarket prices. Go Fresh accepts Senior Farmers Market Coupons, WIC vouchers, and

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\* According to the American Nutrition Association, “Food deserts are defined as parts of the country void of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and healthy food providers.”  
<http://americannutritionassociation.org/newsletter/usda-defines-food-deserts>

SNAP dollars. The market has consistently provided a 50% discount on items for all Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) participants, historically through raising additional funds.

## SALES SUMMARY

Go Fresh sales data is collected on a weekly basis. It is compiled from point of sale software that reports how much was purchased at each stop, what payment method was used, and the variety of produce that was purchased by customers.

Customer reach and total sales have increased the previous six years. This year saw a slight drop in sales due to a slight decrease in the number of stops, and fewer days of the season due to inclement weather and unexpected bus maintenance. The market stops serve 10 of the 17 neighborhoods in Springfield in 2017; however, customers come from at least 14 neighborhoods to shop. In 2017, there was an average of 258 weekly sales transactions. Average weekly sales decreased to \$1,895 in 2017 from \$2,582 in 2016 but were comparable to \$1,720 in 2015. Most sales (65%) are for customers using SNAP EBT, vouchers or coupons. The EBT match for 2017 dropped to zero due to the change to the partnership with the Department of Transitional Assistance HIP, which provided an automatic rebate with purchase of produce. Other noticeable changes in payment method from 2016 to 2017 included an increase in WIC, discount coupons and credit/debit methods and a decrease in STCC tokens. The decrease in STCC tokens is likely related to a late start in the token program (mid-September), while the increase in WIC coupons is likely attributable to the new WIC stop this year with improved marketing. For more details on payment method, see Figure 3.

**Figure 2. Total Sales Over Go Fresh Mobile Market Seasons, 2011-2017**

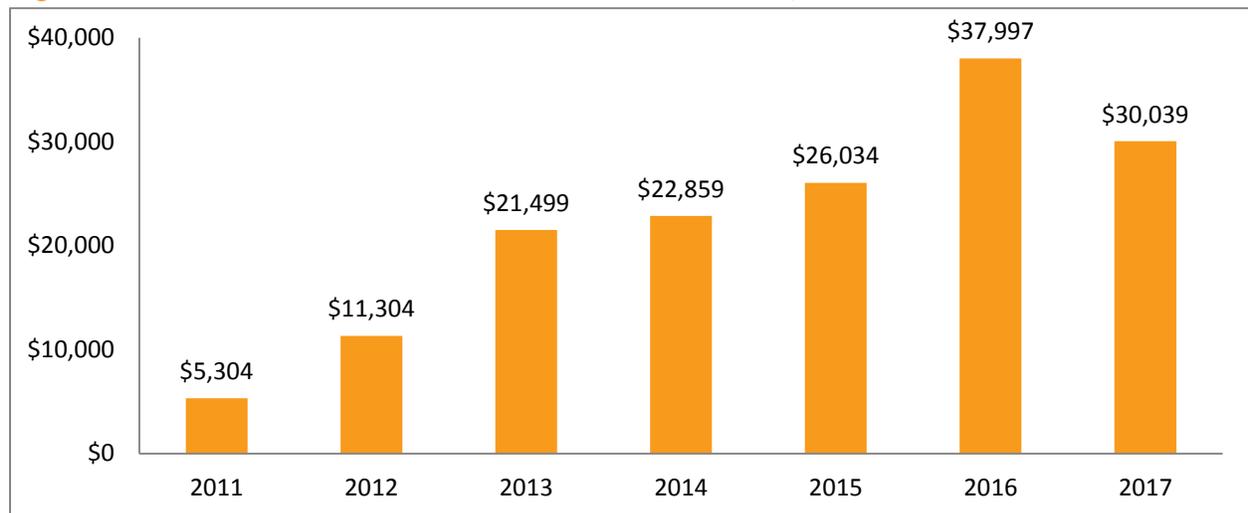
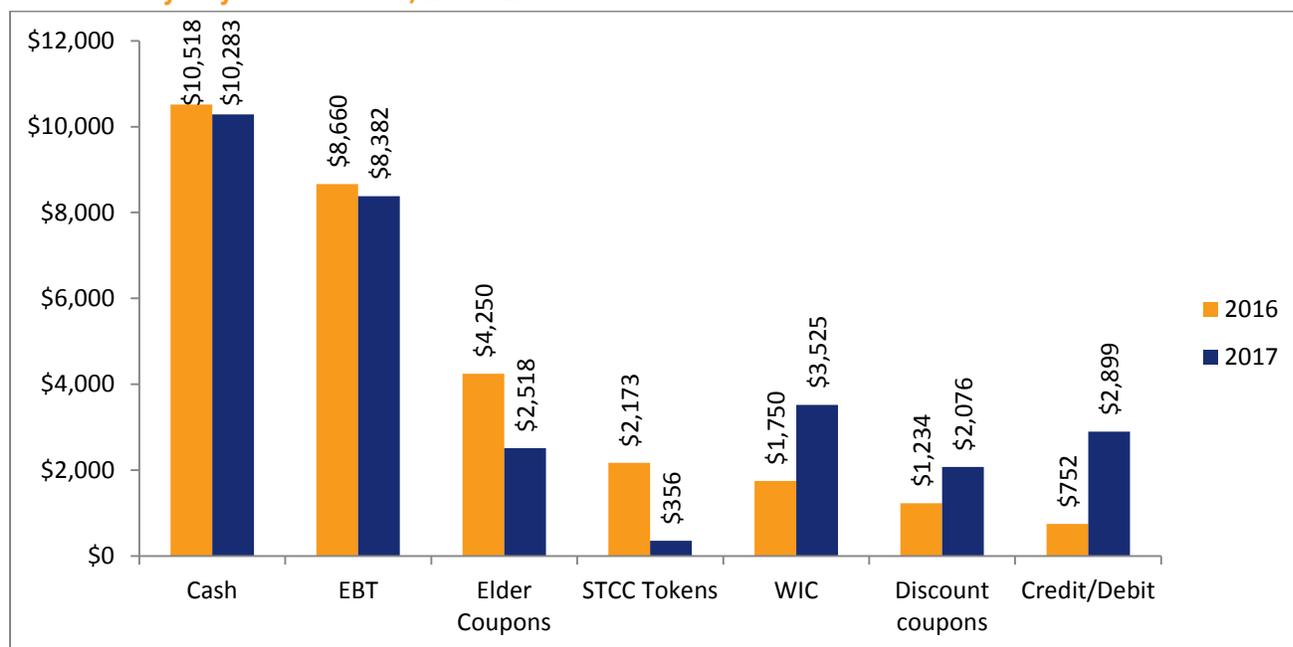


Figure 3. T

## Total Sales by Payment Method, 2016-2017



## DESCRIPTION OF 2017 SURVEY

Customer satisfaction surveys were conducted in person at 13 of the 14 Go Fresh stops in October of 2017. Satisfaction surveys have been implemented since 2012. Fifty-six customers completed the survey, which were self-administered on paper. The survey was available in English and interpreters in Spanish and Russian were used as needed. Over these six years of survey implementation, customers consistently report high satisfaction with the market and its ease of access. Customers also report having shopped at the market for more than one year and that they are eager to come back the next season.

The 2017 survey had five additional questions around food insecurity and the SNAP Healthy Incentive Program. Similar to the 2016 survey, questions related to extending the Go Fresh season beyond October into the winter months were also included.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### Customer Demographics

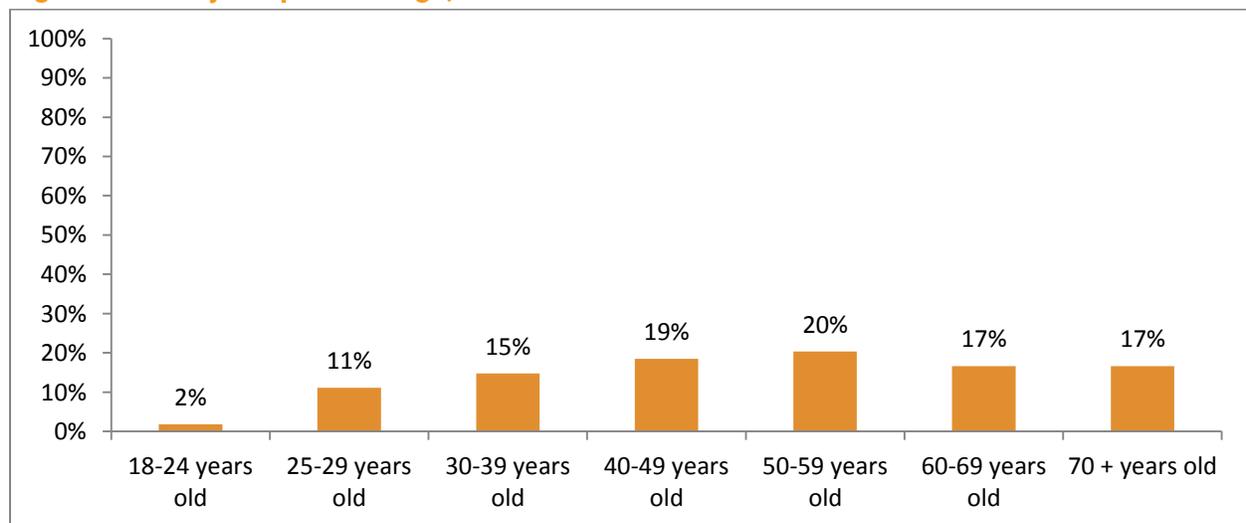
In line with past years, Go Fresh survey respondents were mostly women (75%). About two thirds (67%) were between 18 and 59 years old and a third were over 60 years old (Figure 3). Most shoppers this year identified as Latino or Hispanic (45%), in sharp contrast to 2016 data where the majority were White. In 2017, 25% identified as Black or African-American, 25% as White or Caucasian and 6% as Other (Figure 4). About a quarter (26%) of respondents live alone, over a

third (39%) live with other adults (aged 18 to 65), 13% live with adults over 65 years old, and 28% live with children younger than 18. Survey respondents represented 14 Springfield neighborhoods (Figure 5) and also areas outside of Springfield.

Survey demographics were similar to past years overall aside from Race/Ethnicity. Over the last four years, 70% or more of respondents have been female. In past years those identifying as Latino has made up about a third (29-37%), and those identifying as Black were 20% for 2015 and 2016 (but 40% in 2014). However, 2017 showed a marked increase in Hispanic/Latino responses (45%) (Figure 5). Those over 60 years of age has ranged from 34% in 2017 to 59% in 2015. The percentage of respondents between 40-59 years old has been similar across all three past years ranging from 28-31% but was slightly higher in 2017 (39%). For more details on age for 2017 see Figure 4.

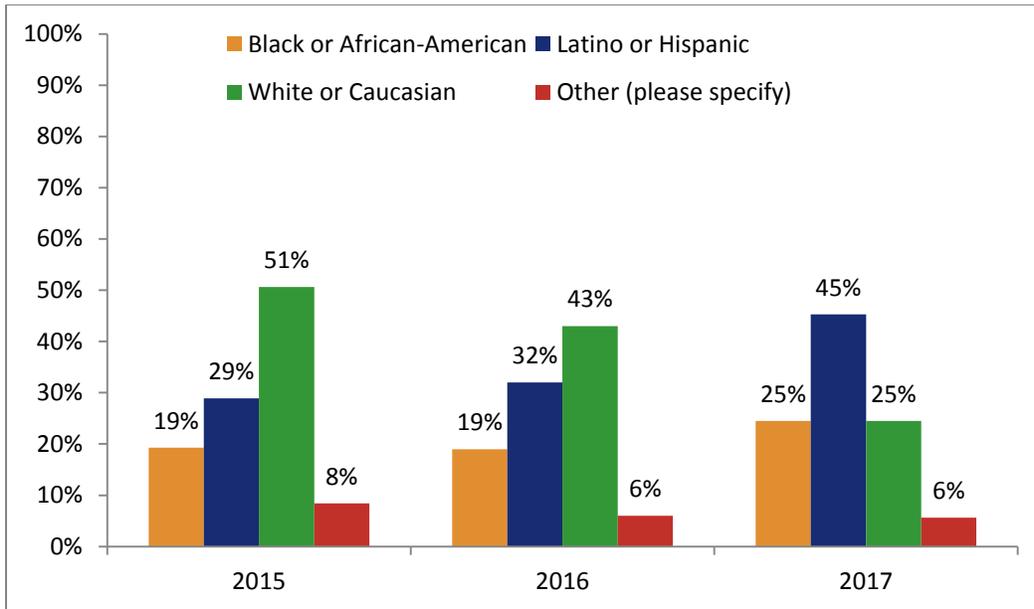
The top five neighborhoods with the most respondents have consistently included Liberty Heights, Sixteen Acres and East Springfield over the three most recent years. Liberty Heights and East Springfield were again included for 2017 with the addition of the South End, the North End and Metro Center (Figure 6). The larger percentage of residents from these additional neighborhoods and loss of Sixteen Acres likely account for the changes in demographics to include a higher number of Hispanic/Latino shoppers. Metro Center, the North End, and the South End have high rates of Hispanic/Latino residents while Sixteen Acres tends to have higher socioeconomic status and more White residents.

**Figure 4. Survey Respondent Age, 2017\***

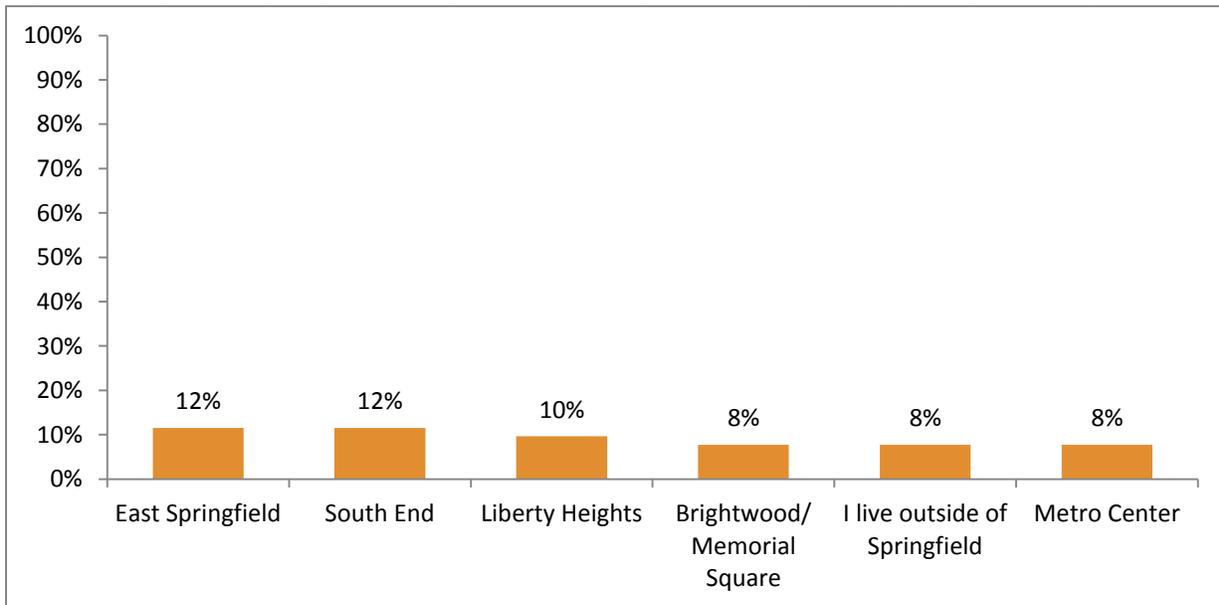


\*of 54 survey respondents

**Figure 5. Survey Respondent Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2017**



**Figure 6. Top Five Springfield Neighborhoods Represented by Survey Respondents, 2017**



### Reach and Frequency

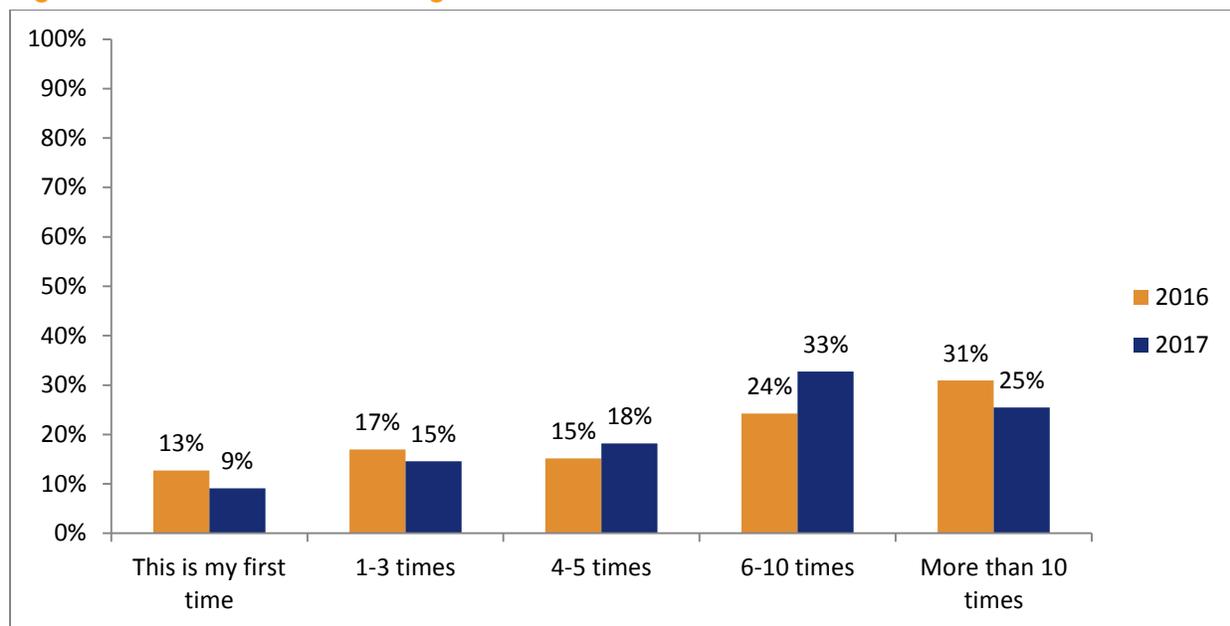
Most customers reported shopping for more than one person (71%) and shopped at the market more than once (91%) during the 2017 season. A quarter of customers shopped at the market more than 10 times during the 2017 season (Figure 7). In addition, 70% were returning customers: 27% had shopped there for two years in a row, 38% for three or four years in a row, and 6% for

five to seven years (Figure 8). Half of respondents were buying for two to three people, 22% were buying for four or more people and just under a third (29%) were buying for themselves (Figure 9).

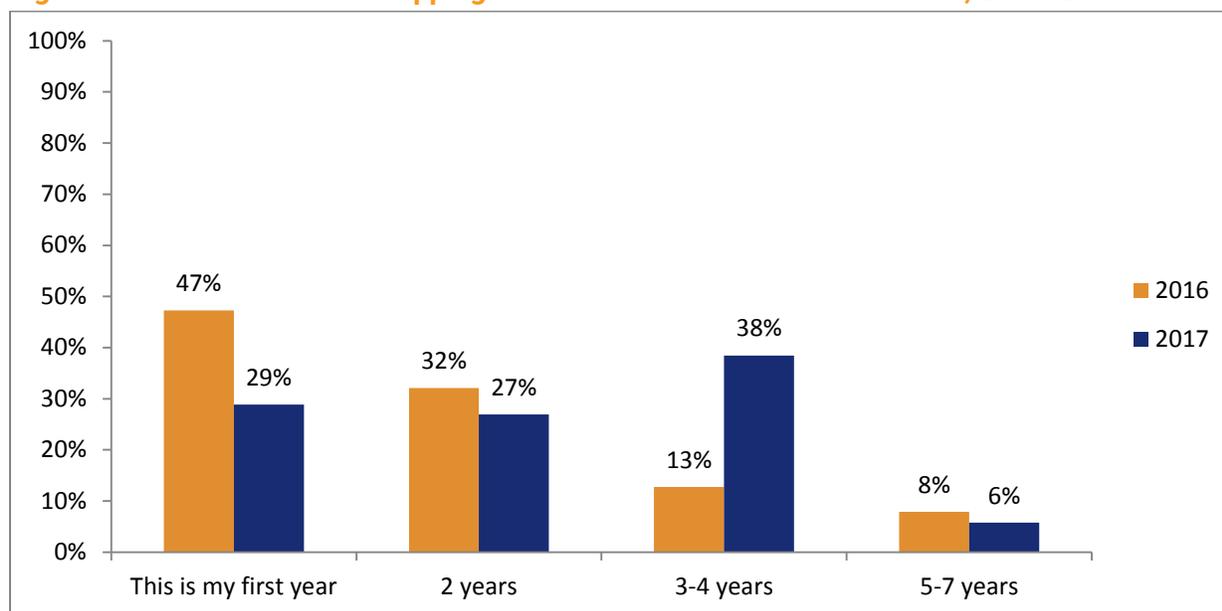
The most frequently visited stops in 2017 were the YMCA and the WIC office on 816 Main St (18% of shoppers at each). These stops were followed by Caring Health Center (13%), Saab Court (13%), the East Springfield Library (11%), Baystate Place (11%), Linden Towers (11%), the STCC Farmer's Market (11%) and the remaining six stops in smaller proportions.

Customers reported different means of accessing Go Fresh. Just over a quarter of those shopping at Go Fresh reported living at a Go Fresh stop. Forty-two percent reported walking to the market and nearly one-third drove to the market; no customers reported biking there. Nine percent used public transportation, which was an 8% increase from 2016. These results are similar to 2015 and 2016 survey results with most shoppers reporting they walked or drove.

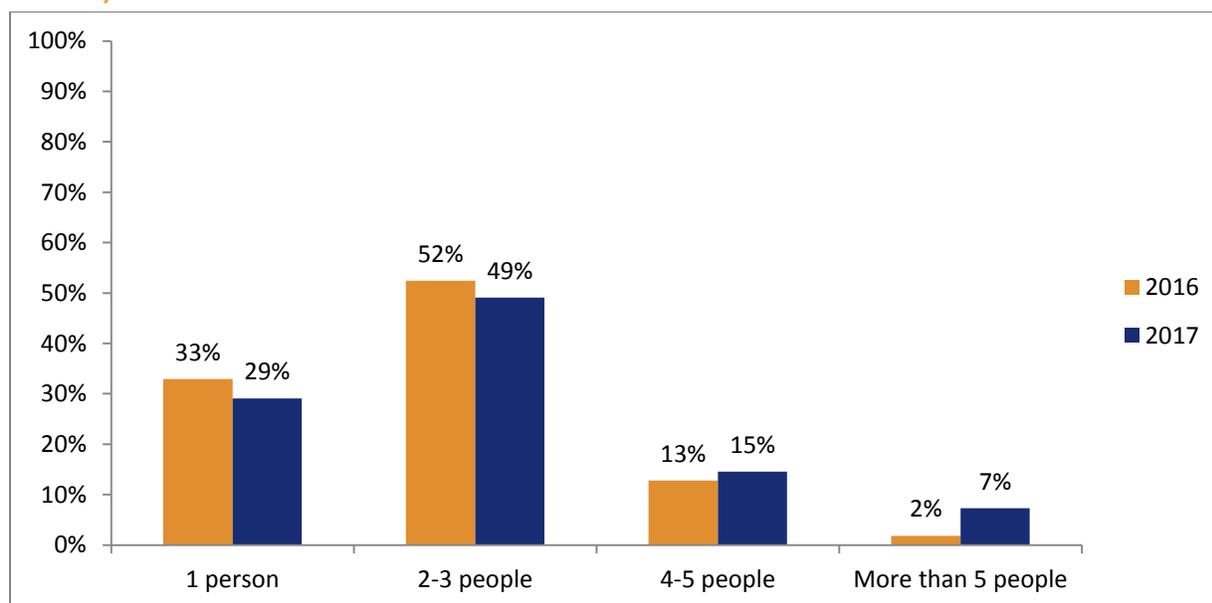
**Figure 7. Number of Visits during 2016 and 2017 Season**



**Figure 8. Number of Years Shopping at Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market, 2016-2017**



**Figure 9. Total Number of Individuals a Shopper is Purchasing for at Go Fresh Mobile Farmer's Market, 2016-2017**

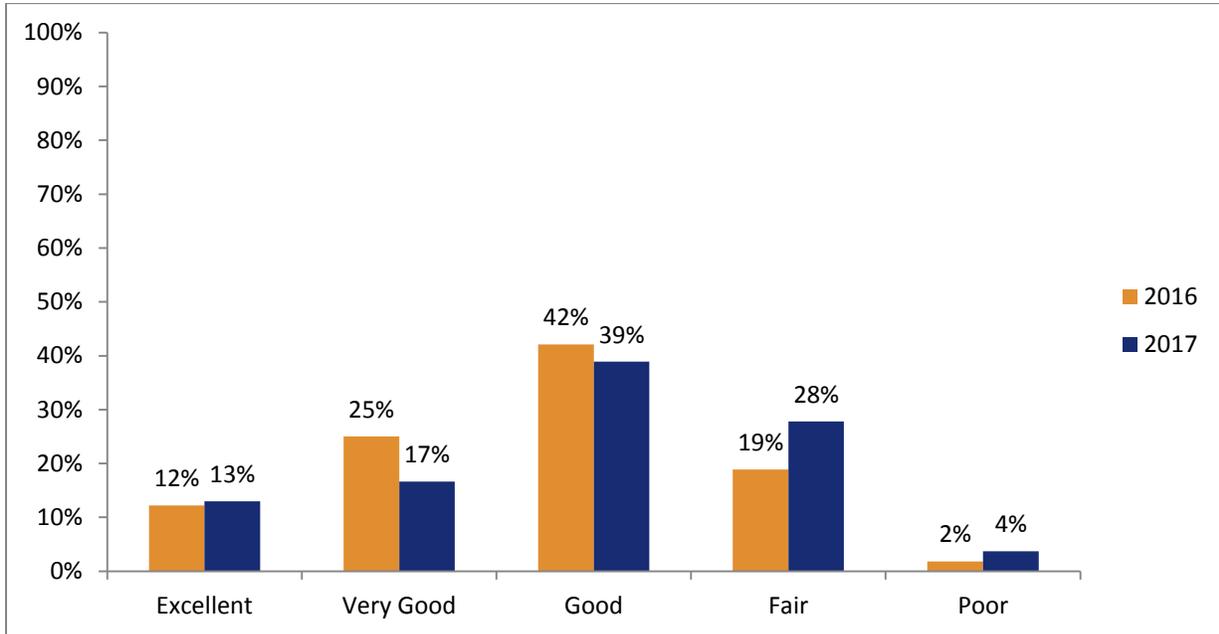


## Health

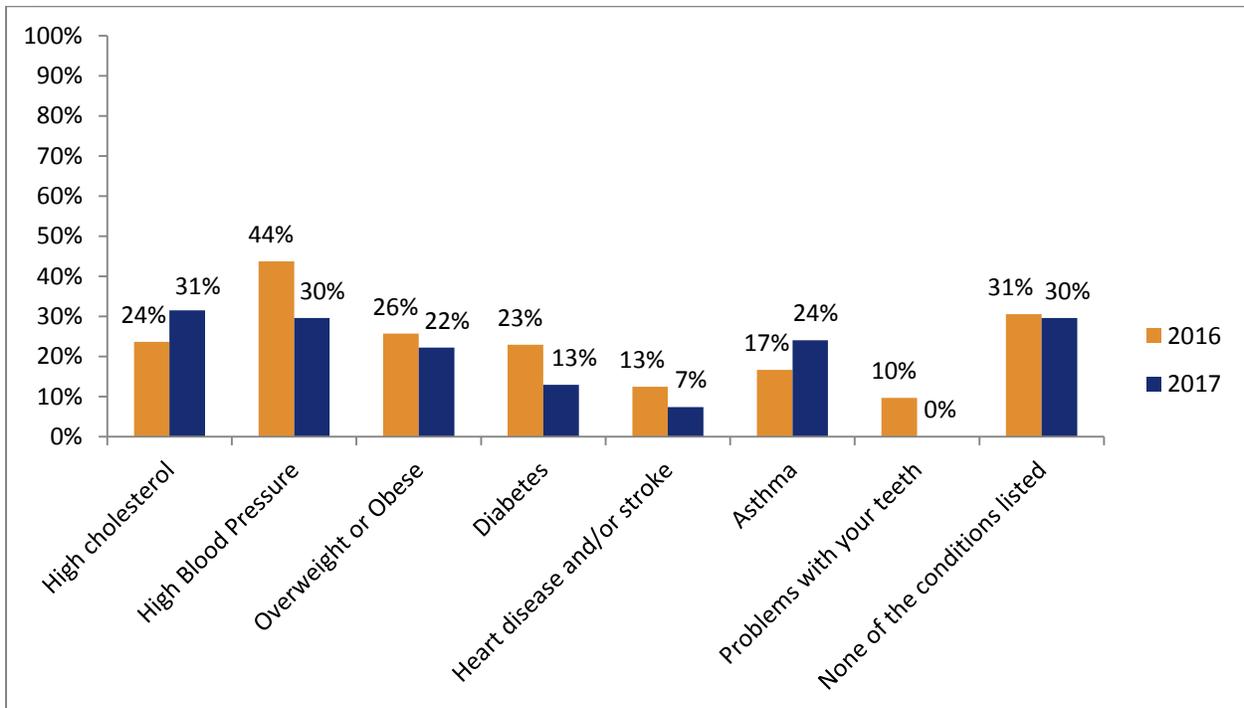
Of the Go Fresh survey respondents, 32% rated their health as either “fair” or “poor” (Figure 10), a 10% increase over last year’s survey respondents (21%). A similar proportion (30%) said their health was either “excellent” or “very good”, a slight *decrease* from 2016 at 37%. Over two thirds (70%) of survey respondents reported at least one chronic health problem, including 30% with

high blood pressure, 24% with asthma, 22% overweight or obese, 31% with high cholesterol, 13% with diabetes, 7% with heart disease and/or a history of stroke (Figure 11).

**Figure 10. Overall Health, 2016-2017**

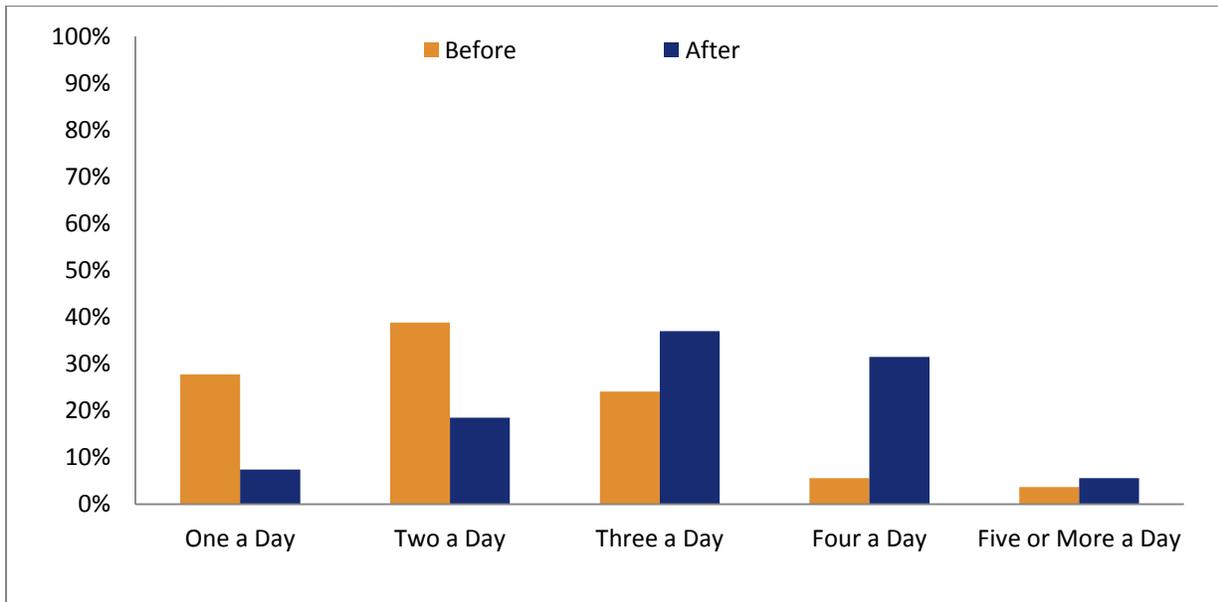


**Figure 11. Chronic Medical Conditions, 2016-2017**



A diet rich in whole fruits and vegetables has been shown to have a positive impact on multiple chronic health conditions.<sup>1-5</sup> Survey **respondents reported an average increase in fruit and vegetable intake by about one serving per day** after they started shopping at the market (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Change in Fruit/Vegetable Intake, 2017**

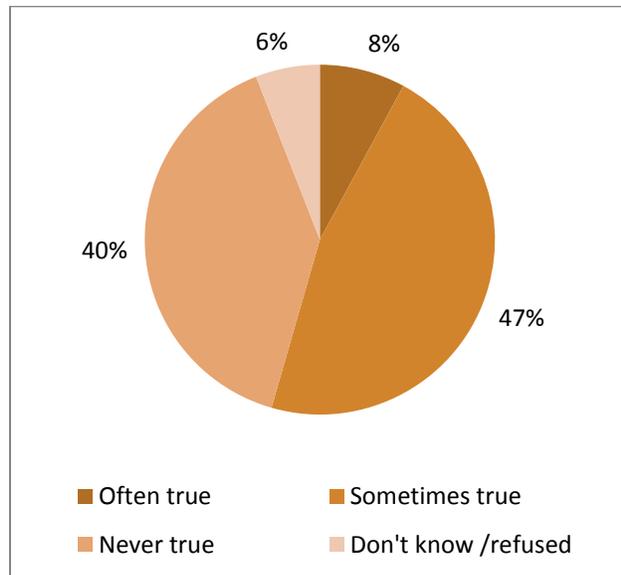


Socialization also plays a role in health, especially mental health in older adults. More than one-third (39%) of survey respondents reported being involved often with at least one community activity, and 27% were involved sometimes. However, 34% were not involved in any community activities. Respondents were most likely to be engaged with their community through a church/religious center or by volunteering. An overwhelming majority of respondents (94%) said they would like to see the Go Fresh Mobile Market offer activities to engage community members in ways to connect with each other around food or other community concerns or interests. Suggestions for community engagement activities included food demonstrations and health/nutrition information as well as “talking out our experience.” Similarly, suggestions for activities and information Go Fresh shoppers would be interested in more generally included food demonstrations/recipes, other health information and elder services information. Food demonstrations were a popular Go Fresh-sponsored activity; 85% of survey respondents had attended food demonstrations put on by UMass Extension during the 2017 season. In addition, 54% had received healthy eating tips from Caring Health Center’s dietitian and 26% received information on benefits and recipes from WIC. Additional suggestions included longer hours and even having a store front.

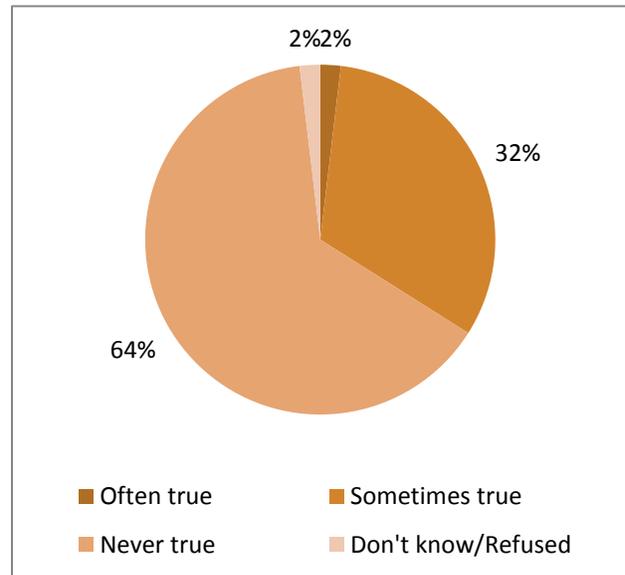
## Food Security

The 2017 survey was the first time Go Fresh customers were asked about their experience of food insecurity (Figure 13). **Thirty-four percent reportedly ran out of food** and didn't have money to get more, in the 12 months prior to the survey (Figure 14). The high level of food insecurity and need for a full line grocery store in the areas the mobile market serves also emerged from some of the open text answers.

**Figure 13. Frequency of Worry About Food Running Out, 2017**



**Figure 14. Frequency of Food Running Out, 2017**



## SNAP Healthy Incentive Program (HIP)

Three survey questions were added to the 2017 survey about the new SNAP Healthy Incentive Program (HIP).<sup>†</sup> Households already receiving SNAP were automatically enrolled in the HIP program which matched dollars spent at farmer's market, mobile markets, farm stands and CSAs up to a monthly cap amount. The match amount was automatically loaded back onto the household's EBT card. The **program was reported to be used by 54% of those surveyed** and 4% were not sure. Of the 36 individuals who answered, 47% said they understood the program at the beginning of the season and 80% said they understood it by the end of the season.

## Opportunities

Season Extension has been a common theme on the customer surveys for the last three years. In 2016, most shoppers said they would be interested in getting frozen produce in the winter (80%). When asked if they would be interested in fresh or frozen produce in the fall and winter months in 2017, **94% said yes**. When asked for details on what they would like to see offered during the

<sup>†</sup> Healthy Incentives Program. Information available at <http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/hip.htm>. Accessed May 7, 2018.

fall/winter, many shoppers answered very broadly with “all/everything/any,” “vegetables,” or “fruits.” Specific items suggested by more than one shopper included onions, potatoes, peppers, and berries. Items suggested by only one shopper included carrots, prepared veggie plates, eggplant, cucumbers, beets, greens, honey, garlic, and apples. Survey respondents reported positively on the Go Fresh Mobile Farmer’s Market. Similar to past years, respondents reported that they look forward to the market for a variety of reasons including, fresh local vegetables (91%), convenience (65%), getting information about health and nutrition (37%), going with friends/neighbors (37%), getting to share and learn about food prep and health (30%), meeting new people (26%), and to get out of the house (22%). **All shoppers surveyed (100%) plan to shop at the market next year** and there continues to be interest in extending the season as well.

## CONCLUSION

Go Fresh continues to provide affordable produce and nutrition education to food insecure Springfield residents. Customers rely on this shopping option to fulfill their households’ food needs, return annually, and frequent multiple Go Fresh stops throughout the season. They see Go Fresh as an opportunity to learn new information about food and nutrition and to engage with their neighbors and broader community. Strong partnerships with local farmers, community-based organizations, housing management, and local funders sustain this important and unique service for Springfield residents with limited access to transportation and healthy eating options.

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Kathy Wicks, Program Manager, Live Well Springfield, [Kwicks@publichealthwm.org](mailto:Kwicks@publichealthwm.org)  
Public Health Institute of Western MA  
[www.PublicHealthWM.org](http://www.PublicHealthWM.org)  
P.O. Box 4895  
Springfield MA 01101-4895