



**For Immediate Release:  
February 21, 2017**

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## **Making Healthy Food More Affordable: New Pilot Program Begins at Select Grocery Stores in San Jose and Gilroy**

### **Double Up Food Bucks Program Supports Low-Income Families and California Farms**

**San Jose, CA** – This morning, grocers, elected officials, and public health advocates announced the start of a new program that helps low-income families afford more fruits and vegetables and supports California farms. The program, called Double Up Food Bucks, allows families participating in the CalFresh program (formerly known as food stamps) to double the value of their benefits when they buy California-grown produce.

The program is available at three participating grocery stores in San Jose and Gilroy (see details below). These stores are the first in California to offer Double Up Food Bucks, which is modeled on a program pioneered in Michigan by the Fair Food Network.

“As a grocer, I’m excited to offer Double Up Food Bucks because I know that most of our customers want to buy fruits and vegetables for their families,” explained Alonzo Lopez, president and co-owner of Arteaga’s Food Center. “For some, though, their limited budgets makes it hard to afford the produce they’d like to buy. Double Up Food Bucks helps close that gap.”

Charlie Hua, manager of Food Bowl 99, another of the participating stores, expressed a similar sentiment. “As a long-time authorized SNAP and WIC vendor, we are proud to participate in the Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB) initiative and hope it develops greater individual awareness of healthier choices that may have otherwise been overlooked without DUFB. We look forward to bringing this to our community while also supporting our network of California growers who are making this program possible.”

The program works by providing matching dollars, in the form of a coupon, when CalFresh customers purchase California-grown produce at the participating stores. If a customer purchases \$7 worth of California-grown fruits or vegetables, they receive a coupon for \$7 they can spend on fresh produce the next time they shop in the store. Customers can earn up to \$10 in Double Up Food Bucks per day. The project, organized by the local non-profit SPUR, aims to distribute \$200,000 to at least 2,000 families during the year-long pilot.

“We’ve launched Double Up Food Bucks to address one of the biggest obstacles to healthy eating – the affordability of healthy food,” said Eli Zigas, food and agriculture policy director at SPUR. “We aim to demonstrate that this program can reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and support California farms, all at the same time.”

Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager also noted the benefits of the program, “When individuals have better access to healthier food, studies show they’re more likely to eat healthy, less likely to be

obese, and less likely to have a diabetes diagnosis. We need more programs like this to promote community health and help residents avoid the need for complex, expensive health care services down the road.”

Jolene Smith, CEO of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, a project partner and funder, highlighted the impact this will have for young children and families. “Parents and caregivers from our Family Resource Centers share with us that they would buy more fruits and vegetables if they could afford them. The Double Up Food Bucks pilot will increase the opportunity for families to purchase the healthy foods they want for themselves and their children.”

By supplementing the CalFresh program, Double Up Food Bucks provides customers with more money to purchase fresh produce at a place where they’re already shopping for fruits and vegetables. “The more seamlessly we can help families access the healthy food they need, particularly in a place where they’re already shopping, the more effective we’ll be at addressing hunger in our communities,” explained Cindy McCown, vice president of community engagement and policy at Second Harvest Food Bank. “This program has the potential to scale to more grocery stores beyond this initial pilot so that we can have a broader impact—not just in our own community, but across the state of California.”

“Increasing access to healthy food for low-income families in Santa Clara County is an integral part of the Public Health Department’s strategic approach to prevent chronic diseases and childhood obesity,” said Aimee Reedy, Deputy Director of the Santa Clara County Public Health Department. “Providing low-income families in our county with more money to buy fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables makes the healthy choice the easier choice.”

Denise Boland, the director of the Department of Employment and Benefits Services at the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, sees a similar benefit. “The County is happy to assist Santa Clara County families stretch their food benefits and make better more nutritional choices,” she noted. “We will be notifying CalFresh participants who live near these stores about the program so they can benefit.”

The stores offering Double Up Food Bucks from now through December 31, 2017 are:

### **San Jose**

Arteaga’s Food Center: 204 Willow Street  
Food Bowl 99: 1625 McKee Road

### **Gilroy**

Arteaga’s Food Center: 6906 Chestnut Street

**About Double Up Food Bucks:** The Double Up Food Bucks program in Santa Clara County doubles the value of federal nutrition benefits so that families participating in CalFresh can bring home even more fresh fruits and vegetables. The program has broad benefits: It makes healthy food more affordable for low-income families and individuals, supports economic development through grocery stores, and increases demand for California-grown produce. The project is led by SPUR in partnership with FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, Santa Clara County Public Health Department, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, Fair Food Network, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, and John Snow Inc.

The project is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program, as well as the generous support of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, The Health Trust and the John & Marcia Goldman Foundation.

**For more information, see: [www.DoubleUpCa.org](http://www.DoubleUpCa.org)**

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