Marketing Food Check-out Week® in Volusia County

KAREN STAUDERMAN*, K. BRYANT, AND J. TAUFER

University of Florida, IFAS, Volusia County Extension

There is a need to find solutions to feeding families healthy foods on a tight budget. Farm Bureau’s Food Check-out Week® is a timely event to focus on these issues. Florida farmers are committed to producing safe, abundant and healthy food. University of Florida IFAS Extension along with Volusia County Farm Bureau and Florida Strawberry Growers Association (FSGA) help consumers find solutions to eating healthfully on a stretched budget. The success of this event is a measure of consumers’ motivation to learn about Florida fresh produce and to attend educational demonstrations held at the farmer’s market. Additionally, it is to bring about awareness of produce through “Jammer,” a strawberry mascot used in marketing Florida strawberries (Fig. 1). Agents worked with media publishing articles in the local newspaper on Florida mascots including “Jammer,” the FSGA mascot. They engaged growers to supply produce and demonstrate freshness, taste, and quality of cooked kale and fresh strawberries. They addressed nutritional and health benefits of Florida produce. Finally, the mascot, Jammer, was procured to meet and greet patrons at the market, which provided educational literature for both adults and youth to promote Florida strawberries. The patron participation was doubled from previous years; youth attended, making the event an educational field day. Customers were motivated and engaged in the educational talks. Stakeholders remain committed to another year in partnership. Children and adults enjoyed the interaction with Jammer and vendors were thrilled with the support for their commodity. The local newspaper published a feature article along with the Volusia County Farm Bureau newspaper. Finally, the Florida Farm Bureau featured the successful event on their website. Through this event, agents increased awareness of Florida strawberries and produce, while enhancing customer motivation and participation to learn about solutions to feeding their families healthy foods on a tight budget. This event is easily implemented in other counties that have local farmers markets, grocery stores, and other venues. It promotes awareness of extension education and opportunities to collaborate with other farming organizations and demonstrates extension’s commitment to the agriculture community. Agents of differing disciplines collaborate to meet the objectives of the program. This program requires willingness of volunteers, engaged stakeholders, and collaborative partners for success.

*Corresponding author; email: kstauderman@ufl.edu