

**For Immediate Release**

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**Prescriptions Filled at Farmers Markets Cultivate Health in Washtenaw County**  
*Health Department program improves health, relationships, and local food economy*

YPSILANTI, Mich., June 20, 2019 – After Anita Stewart suffered from a series of strokes and the accompanying medical bills, she went to Faith in Action for help. Faith in Action, an essential support provider in Chelsea, then referred her to get a free prescription, but not one that could be filled at a pharmacy.

Washtenaw County Health Department’s Prescription for Health program writes “prescriptions” for fresh fruits and vegetables. The prescription may be filled at local farmers markets and is worth a total of \$100.

“It got me to realize how important eating was for your health,” says Stewart. “I’ve been eating so much healthier and feeling better.”

The average Prescription for Health patient ate nearly a full cup more of fruits and vegetables per day after participating in the 2018 program. Participants also [reported](#) eating less unhealthy food and an increase in self-reported health.

Stewart has now been a Prescription for Health client for seven years, as well as a Community Health Worker for the program for five years.

At each visit to the farmers market, Community Health Workers provide individual nutrition education and support to patients. Nearly all participants surveyed last year said that Community Health Workers supported them in eating healthier.

“I talk to people like I want to be talked to,” said Stewart. “I’ve seen so many people change over the years. It’s miraculous. They’re full of energy and excited about coming.”

Prescription for Health does not only improve patients’ health, but also contributes to the local food economy. In 2018, 438 patients spent a total of \$28,428 at local farmers markets.

The program runs every June to December. Local clinicians refer patients who have both a risk for chronic disease and difficulty accessing food. Enrollment for the 2019 season is underway now. View participating clinics and farmers markets [on the program’s website](#).

Prescription for Health is generously funded by Saint Joseph Mercy Health System with additional financial support from multiple partners. Washtenaw County Health Department coordinates the program.

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Founded in 2008, Washtenaw County's Prescription for Health was the first program of its kind in Michigan, as well as one of the first in the nation. Many more programs in the state and country have been shaped and inspired by Washtenaw County's. The federal government is now offering millions of dollars of grants for produce prescription projects.



A Community Health Worker handing out Prescription for Health tokens at Pittsfield Township Farmers Market in 2017. [Download photo for use in articles here.](#)

### About Washtenaw County Health Department



Washtenaw County  
Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at [washtenaw.org/health](http://washtenaw.org/health) or call 734-544-6700.

## About Saint Joseph Mercy Health System



Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (SJMHS) is a health care organization serving seven counties in southeast Michigan including Livingston, Washtenaw, Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Jackson, and Lenawee. It includes 537-bed St. Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor, 443-bed St. Joseph Mercy Oakland in Pontiac, 304-bed St. Mary Mercy Livonia, 136-bed St. Joseph Mercy Livingston in Howell, and 133-bed St. Joseph Mercy Chelsea. Combined, the five hospitals are licensed for 1,553 beds, have five outpatient health centers, six urgent care facilities, more than 25 specialty centers; employ more than 16,200 individuals and have a medical staff of nearly 2,700 physicians. SJMHS has annual operating revenues of about \$1.9 billion and returns about \$120 million to its communities annually through charity care and community benefit programs.

SJMHS is a member of Trinity Health, a leading Catholic health care system based in Livonia, Mich. Trinity Health operates in 22 states, employs about 97,000 people, has annual operating revenues of about \$15.8 billion and assets of about \$23.4 billion. Additionally, the organization returns almost \$1 billion to its communities annually in the form of charity care and other community benefit programs.

For more information on health services offered at Saint Joseph Mercy Health System, please visit [www.stjoeshealth.org](http://www.stjoeshealth.org).

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