

# HealthReach Community Health Centers



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## Bingham woman finds low-cost, high-quality produce in hometown

BINGHAM - Lena Achey was a regular at the Food for All Farm Stand. Every Thursday from September 18 through October 23, Lena and 60 other people purchased produce from the mobile farm stand set up on the front lawn of Bingham Area Health Center.

When asked what she liked best about the Food for All Farm Stand, Lena replied, "The main thing is the food, the good quality... You know what it is and it ain't gonna be [sitting] a week or two in the store."

Lena came for the quality. Others came for the price. The cost of food was subsidized through support from the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets and Good Shepherd Food Bank, and customers paid as low as \$0.40/lb. for apples and \$0.10/lb. for potatoes. The food was all locally grown, sourced through Good Shepherd Food Bank's Mainers Feeding Mainers program. The Food for All Farm stand was a pilot project aimed at creating an alternative food access model that will make fresh, local produce affordable and accessible to rural Mainers who are low income or receive SNAP benefits. The farm stand accepted both cash and EBT.

The produce changed each week along with the season, but offerings included tomatoes, onions, carrots, potatoes, cabbage, green beans, beets, turnips, apples, fresh herbs, and at least four varieties of squash. Approximately 600 pounds of produce were sold each week. Lena struggled to decide on her favorite fruit or vegetable purchased at the farm stand. "I can't really tell you a favorite one because I love them all," she said. "But if I had to choose a favorite one, it's carrots...and squash and turnips and beets."

Lena's only regret was that the farm stand could not continue year-round. She shared, "I love to come. I meet a lot of people here...I like to be here because I know what I'm getting and the food is great. I just wish they had more of it." Bingham Area Health Center and its partners hope to bring the Food for All Farm Stand back to Bingham next year, and look forward to seeing Lena's smiling face each week.



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