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## **Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center Awarded \$100,000 Grant to Help SNAP Participants Afford Healthy Foods**

*Chicago’s PSMEMC is the only hospital in the U.S. to receive USDA FINI funding. The grant helps city residents in need of nutrition education and improved food access.*

**(Chicago, IL)** – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center (PSMEMC) a \$100,000 grant to fund a health-focused farmers market on its hospital campus. The funding - the largest single amount awarded as part of the pilot program - was awarded through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program, administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). **PSMEMC was the only hospital to receive funding from this USDA program, and is one of only a few health care providers to receive the competitive grant.** PSMEMC will use the funds to provide point-of-sale incentives for healthy fruits and vegetables among low-income individuals participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP). PSMEMC’s “West Town Health Market” will operate on the first and third Thursday of the month through 2017. Community residents, patients and hospital associates are welcome to attend.

The initiative was driven by PSMEMC’s 2016 – 2019 strategic plan of preventing and reducing chronic disease. According to recent reports, 1 in 3 residents within PSMEMC’s primary service area are classified as obese, and diabetes is among the top 5 causes of death. This project will work to reduce these rates by increasing food accessibility and affordability, as well as expanding access to nutrition education and health screening opportunities. In an effort to reduce food insecurity, the grant funds *2 for 1 Fresh Fruit and Produce Coupons* and *Nutrition Prescriptions* that SNAP participants can redeem at the health market. Food insecurity is a major contributing factor of negative health outcomes and is prevalent within PSMEMC’s service area.

One’s income or zip code should never serve as a barrier to obtaining safe, nutritious, and affordable food,” said United States Representative Mike Quigley, whose district covers PSMEMC. “The work that Presence Health is doing to make nourishing meals accessible and improve the health of our communities is commendable, and this grant from the USDA is well-deserved. As a frequent farmers’ market attendee, I’ve seen firsthand how these important neighborhood events promote healthy living and stimulate local economies.

The West Town Health Market takes a collaborative approach in addressing food insecurity in the region by partnering with eight separate community-based organizations that will help with distributing the food coupons as well as providing market workforce training for residents. “We are very honored to receive this unique grant from the USDA that emphasizes Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center’s important work in ensuring local residents and patients can afford nutritious food and lead productive, healthful lives,” said PSMEMC Clinical Nutrition Manager and Health Market Manager Nick Groch, “I would also like to thank our partners at community-based organizations in the West Town area for their support, because collaborations of this magnitude are crucial to reducing food insecurity in our community.”

The *West Town Health Market* takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month from 2-7 pm on the corner of Division St. and Oakley Blvd, on the Presence Saint Mary Campus. For more information about the Health Market, visit: [www.presencehealth.org/WTHHealthMarket/](http://www.presencehealth.org/WTHHealthMarket/)

**Media is encouraged to attend the next West Town Health Market, Thursday, August 17, 2017 at 2pm.**

To read the full USDA announcement: <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2017/08/07/secretary-perdue-announces-168-million-encourage-snap-participants>

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**About Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center**

*Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center is a premier two-campus medical center on Chicago's near northwest side. Certified as a Primary Stroke Center and accredited as a Chest Pain Center, the hospital is recognized as one of only three Top Teaching Hospitals in Illinois by the Leapfrog Group. The medical center specializes in behavioral health, cancer care, cardiac care, digestive diseases, neurosciences, obstetrics, midwifery, emergency services, and primary care.*

**About Presence Health**

*Presence Health is one of the largest Catholic health systems in Illinois, providing compassionate care to over 4 million people. With nearly 150 sites of care including 10 hospitals, over 15,000 associates and more than 4,000 medical professionals, Presence Health has annual revenue of \$2.6 billion.*