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Baltimore City Health Department
1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202
Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor – Oxiris Barbot, M.D., Commissioner of Health

Media Contact: *Brian Schleiter*
443-984-2623
mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Innovative Virtual Supermarket Program Adds Option For Remote Grocery Ordering

Residents benefiting from increased access to healthy food options can place orders from any computer, any time

BALTIMORE, MD (June 2, 2011) – The Baltimore City Health Department’s Baltimarket – Virtual Supermarket Program (VSP) is making it even easier for residents to order groceries online and have them delivered to one of four local Enoch Pratt Free Library branches or school pickup sites. The innovative program primarily serves residents living in large “food deserts,” or areas without access to healthy food options.

Now residents who wish to do so can place a grocery order using any Internet-connected computer for free delivery and pickup at a participating VSP location. The change eliminates the need for two separate trips to the order/pickup site; however, VSP staff will continue assisting those in need with placing orders onsite during scheduled ordering times.

The VSP currently operates at the Washington Village, Orleans Street and Cherry Hill Enoch Pratt Free Library branches, as well as George Washington Elementary School.

“Ordering from home represents the next evolution of the Virtual Supermarket Program’s model for increasing access to healthy foods in neighborhoods with no markets and low vehicle ownership,” said Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot. “Equally important, the online interface offers nutritional information so shoppers can make healthy choices.”

Easy-to-follow guides on how to order remotely can be picked up at each of the four delivery locations and can be found online at www.baltimarket.org or at www.baltimorehealth.org/virtualsupermarket.html. Residents can place orders up until noon on the date of delivery. Delivery charges, which can exceed \$15, are paid by the health department, eliminating a major barrier to home online ordering. Santoni’s Supermarket, a long-time Baltimore City grocer, fulfills all VSP grocery orders.

“Baltimarket – VSP increases access to high quality, affordable groceries in the very neighborhood where people live, eliminating the difficulty and expense of securing transportation to distant stores,” said program coordinator Laura Fox.

The four VSP sites are located in neighborhoods identified as having the greatest need for the project. Washington Village has the sixth highest mortality burden out of the 55 city community statistical areas for causes of death related to diet, including heart disease, stroke and diabetes. The Perkins/Middle East neighborhood (served by the Orleans library branch) ranks 19th in this category. The Cherry Hill neighborhood has the third highest heart disease mortality rate in Baltimore City.

Order placement and pickup information for the four locations is as follows:

	Orleans Street Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library	Washington Village Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library	George Washington Elementary School	Cherry Hill Branch, Enoch Pratt Free Library
Address	1303 Orleans Street (21231)	856 Washington Blvd. (21230)	800 Scott St. (21230)	606 Cherry Hill Road (21225)
Order Day	Tuesdays	Mondays	Mondays	Thursdays
Order Time	3 pm – 6 pm	Noon – 3 pm	3:30 pm – 5:30 pm	3:30 pm – 6 pm
Pick up Day	Wednesdays	Tuesdays	Tuesdays	Fridays
Pick up Time	4:00 pm–5:00 pm	3 pm – 4 pm	4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	4 pm – 5 pm

Accepted forms of payment include cash, debit cards, credit cards and EBT (food stamps).

For more information on the Virtual Supermarket Program, visit our Website at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/virtualsupermarket.html> or at <http://www.baltimarket.org>. For tips on eating healthy, visit <http://www.getfreshbaltimore.com>.

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