



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

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Better Schools. Safer Streets. Stronger Neighborhoods.

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Mayor Rawlings-Blake Announces Baltimore’s Efforts to Improve Resident’s Access to Healthy, Affordable Food

Joined by business and community partners to celebrate the first National Food Day.

BALTIMORE, MD. (October 24, 2011) – Today, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake gathered with city agency heads, representatives of the United Way of Central Maryland, urban farmers and healthy food advocates to commemorate the country’s first national Food Day. The Mayor announced a series of planned events which celebrate the many healthy, affordable and sustainable food initiatives taking place in Baltimore City.

Food Day is a nationwide celebration to promote healthy, affordable and sustainably grown food. The goal is to raise awareness for improved food policies – nationally, regionally and locally. National Food Day is organized around six principles including: expand access to food and alleviate hunger; reduce diet-related diseases; promote health by curbing junk-food marketing to kids; and support sustainable farms.

“More than ever, Baltimore residents have many choices for securing healthy, affordable food from sustainable sources, including urban farms, public markets, local farmers markets and our Virtual Supermarket program,” said Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. “Solving the food access issue is critical to improving the health of all Baltimore residents.”

The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative has received national recognition for its efforts to improve access to healthy, affordable foods in food deserts – areas where residents lack access to healthy food options. Mayor Rawlings-Blake credited public-private partnerships created by the city’s Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC), Baltimore City’s equivalent to a food policy council.

“For preventing heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions, having access to healthy foods is nearly, if not equally, important as having access to quality health care,” said Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot.

Mayor Rawlings-Blake also announced that Howard Park will receive \$759,000 from the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative to build a long deserved grocery store in their community. The project is one of only 12 Community Development Financial Institutions nationally to receive a share of \$25 million. Projects must demonstrate they will eliminate food deserts in low-income and rural communities.

“These federal funds will not only help build a new grocery store, but also support the development of a commercial kitchen, and revitalize farmers markets in the area,” said Department of Planning Director Thomas J. Stosur. “This is a great example of how a grocery store can increase a community’s access to healthy foods and spur job creation.”

Getting children to adopt healthy snack habits is the goal of a new \$1.7 million grant from the Federal Fruit and Vegetable Program. Eighty-three participating schools receive \$50 per child to serve fresh fruits and vegetables as snacks during the school day. In addition, with support from Kaiser Permanente, 250 fruit and vegetables ads designed by elementary school students through the Get Fresh Baltimore campaign are currently in public buses, subway stations and light rails trains.

“What makes Baltimore City unique is we are designing innovative solutions to our food and sustainability issues at the neighborhood level, tailoring our approach to meet the specific needs of our diverse communities,” said Holly Freishtat, Baltimore City’s Food Policy Director. “In some areas it may be a new grocery store is needed; in others, a farmer’s market or the Virtual Supermarket is increasing access.”

United Way of Central Maryland recently announced a new Access to Healthy Food Initiative, a three-year plan that focuses on making healthy, affordable food available to underserved communities in Baltimore City and several surrounding counties. UWCM has committed to source, distribute and increase access to 1.5 million pounds of healthy food for 60,000 central Marylanders.

The following events are planned to commemorate Food Day in Baltimore:

- Food Day Celebration in Pigtown: Come celebrate Food Day with free food demonstrations, kids activities and fresh produce for purchase at George Washington Elementary School, 800 Scott Street, from 2:30 p.m.– 6:00 p.m.
- Center For A Livable Future Teach-In: The teach-in from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. includes presentations and discussions by Johns Hopkins School of Public Health faculty, staff and students on topics such as food production, diet, food security, ending hunger, and the famine in the horn of Africa. Located at 615 North Wolfe Street.
- John Eager Howard’s National Food Day Celebration: From 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Students will participate in a mock farmers market to learn about Maryland produce, a pumpkin museum/contest, face painting, harvest hat decorating, a physical activity, and gardening activities. Located at 2011 Linden Avenue.

For more information on the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, visit
<http://baltimorecity.gov/Government/AgenciesDepartments/Planning/BaltimoreFoodPolicyInitiative.aspx>.

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