



# BROOKLYN\_BORN

[Change Banner Image](#)**154,981**  
SparkPoints[Info](#)[Photos](#)[Feed](#)[Blogs](#)[Awards](#)[More](#)

## What can you buy with food stamps? Two different solutions

Sunday, July 28, 2013

Yesterday I read about two different responses to a difficult problem – how to get people to use their food stamps for healthy food.

Darly55 described one state's Restrictions on Food Stamp Purchases [www.sparkpeople.com/mypage\\_public\\_journal\\_individual.asp?blog\\_id=5434929](http://www.sparkpeople.com/mypage_public_journal_individual.asp?blog_id=5434929)

There's a different approach in my area - expanding options for food stamp purchases.

Just in case they take down this news item from their website, ([www.livehealthylynchburg.com](http://www.livehealthylynchburg.com))

I've quoted the main points here.

"The bad news: 24,000 Lynchburg residents live in a food desert, an area where healthy food is difficult to acquire.

The good news: SNAP/EBT recipients can now use their benefits at the Downtown Lynchburg Community Market with local food vendors.

The even better news: SNAP recipients will get "double dollars" on fruits and vegetables (buy \$4 of blueberries and get \$8 worth!) thanks to a grant by the Virginia Department of Health! With continued work of the newly founded nonprofit Lynchburg Area Food Council, founded by locals who are passionate about the issues of food access, insecurity, quality and systems in Region 2000, we hope to soon announce the creation of a regional food co-op to be located in the food deserts so all residents have access to healthy foods, and a produce market on wheels that can travel to our FORMER food deserts!"

Time will tell which approach works best, but this reminds me of a recent debate about "fat shaming" to get people to get serious about their weight – encouragement vs. discrimination.

I know it's not exactly the same thing and another topic altogether. Still I wonder who it is that's doing the shaming/discrimination. With nearly 70% of our population overweight, obese or worse, who is left to "cast the first stone?" Are people just putting down those worse off than themselves?

Fortunately I've never been in a position to need government help or charity. If I had an empty pantry and few resources, I can't say for sure what choice I would make.

Personally, I believe in encouragement. That's why I'm here on SP.

[Edit Blog Entry](#) | [Delete Blog Entry](#)

[Add a Blog Entry](#)

See Today's Featured Member Blog Posts

### More Blogs by BROOKLYN\_BORN

[Now I can add one more event to my "Anniversary Dates" to forget - 6/7/2021](#)

[Avoiding Our Wedding Anniversary - 6/4/2021](#)

[Multitasking for Safety – Plus Remembrance and Reflection - 6/1/2021](#)

[Taps Across America – The National Moment of Remembrance - Monday 5/31/21 3PM - 5/30/2021](#)

[View All >](#)

## Member Comments About This Blog Post



**MARYJEANSL**

Maybe some "both-and" instead of just "either-or" - it seems to me that both ideas have some merit - but it would be very, very interesting to see what the results are a bit down the road.  
2875 days ago



**CAKEMAKERMOM**

That sounds like a better plan than the ones (Did you hear about Wisconsin?) that limit foods and make it harder to feed a family with limited funds.



Education is the key for all people, not just the dirt poor ones.

I hope you never have to be in the position of basically begging for food, because that's what it feels like to fill out that paperwork and bring the pride down. I left my longer 2 cents about the topic on the other blog.  
2877 days ago



**MERRYMARY42**

great blog as always, and it seems like we all have a wide range of thinking along this line, me as one really believe food stamps are necessary and not evil, but a hand up, if and when it is taken advantage of :shame on them" but I hope and believe that is in the minority, we all have pride, sometimes it is harder to reach, but it is so much better to earn it than be given it, same with



baking bread  
like I said nice blog, and I spent quite a long while reading all the responses,  
2877 days ago



**DESERTJULZ**

I love that approach, giving extra fruit & veg for the same price. Also in Arizona, the Farmer's Markets now take Food Stamps & WIC. I do believe that food stamps should actually be limited to food and that would not include junk food. No soda, no chips. Freedom of choice in what to eat is still open, just as you cannot spend them for beer, so you should not be able to spend them on soda. :D  
2877 days ago



**TRAVELGRRL**

Great conversation!



I love using a carrot, but sometimes there's nothing like the stick, either.  
2877 days ago



**LINDAKAY228**

I had read the article yesterday about one state (I think it was South Carolina) attempting to restrict what food stamps can buy to healthy items and not junk food. I personally think that would be great. I also think the second article you posted about is another great idea to help people use their food stamps for healthier food. I think both of those together, with other helpful ideas people may come up with, would be great!  
2877 days ago



**TERRIJ7**

Great ideas for enabling families to eat well, and isn't that the whole idea?  
2877 days ago



**CHERALA**

Perspective is an amazing thing. If you want to look for abuses of the system, you'll find them. If you want to look for compliance within the system, you'll find that.



Shaming may work in a small, closed community but I fail to see how that works in the general public at large. Exactly \*who\* is supposed to do the shaming? And what gives them the \*right\* to shame?

I applaud the second solution and efforts across the US to be able to "double" the benefits locally on fruits and vegetables. I would like to see everyone being able to take advantage of this.

In regards to the first solution -

Every year I see "reports" on what it's like to "live" on SNAP benefits. But they only get part of the picture because while they're changing their menu based on SNAP benefits, they're not actually living the whole experience.

For one moment though, consider whether you could exclusively live on SNAP benefits for a month?

That is - you start with nothing - no food in the house, no non-food items that are not covered by SNAP (soap, paper products, cleaning products, diapers, sanitary items) - absolutely, positively, completely, nothing. That your family would not be able to give you anything. That you would have to live where they live, use the transportation they do, work at the jobs they do, deal with the family (or lack of) issues they do.

You may have the knowledge to make better food choices, and the cooking ability to carry them out - but how long could you sustain that behavior for an entire month having to do everything else they need to do to survive?

2877 days ago



#### GINIEMIE



Shaming only works on a few, but at the risk of long term resentment. However, some people when faced with a challenge call it demeaning. My doctor challenged me to lose weight, I didn't like it, but I knew he was right. The shame I felt was that I had to wait for him to say it.

I love the double for concept at the fruit/vegie market. I would be there-if I had the gas, now the traveling market sounds like a great help for the elderly and those whose means don't allow them to go far out of their neighborhood to get fresh foods.

It's been so long since I helped families with food stamps that I don't know what's allowed/not allowed. I found it amazing though that there wasn't an allowance for laundry detergent!

When I give to the St. Vincent de Paul, I think about what they may not have. Mac & cheese is one of my offerings, although I try to find a low sodium variety. Same with spaghetti sauce paired with whole wheat pasta. I make sure to stock up laundry soaps, shampoos, toilet paper and tissues these items consume a lot of money which could be used towards fresh foods.

When I had a class I provided tissues and allowed students to take some for later. I provided pencils and paper too. We are the government and some of us have more than others. I have less than many, now but still more than many so I try to help.

Okay, I think I've wandered off topic and back on enough. Ciao!



2877 days ago



#### DR1939



Food stamps are a far more complex issue than just whether or not people can purchase junk food with them. Part of the original purpose was to support US farmers. At that time people were given commodities such as dried milk, powdered eggs, cheese, flour, and cornmeal. These usually were distributed monthly by county agents. Sometime in the 60s or 70s this was switched to food stamps and people purchased their own food, but the foods were limited to a specific range of items and no non-food items were allowed, e.g., toilet paper, cleaning products. This change was as much an attempt to spread the government dollars around to food producers as well as farmers as it was to aid poor families. Over time the regulations on what can be purchased broadened as more types of producers lobbied to be included. As to cashiers being food police, they simply ring up the food and other items and tell the customer how much they owe in cash and how much from their food program card.

For several years Minnesota has encouraged the use of food stamps at farmers markets. Our local food shelf, which a NGO, has a huge garden where people can earn points for produce by working in the garden. It also has cooking classes and educational opportunities.

Finally, a story from my callow youth. I am white, well educated, and upper-middle class. With some other white women I was visiting in the home of some Black women we had met through church activities. We were discussing the problems with grocery stores and nutrition problems in the poorer sections of town. I said that we also needed to spend some effort on educating poor people to make better food choices so that they got more for their money. The Black women set me in my place quite firmly, telling me that poor people were better at getting the most out of their limited funds than were the middle class because the poor had to do so. It was a good lesson for me not to make assumptions. I also remembered my work with a settlement house (see how old I am) serving Mexican Americans and the ingenious ways that those women fed their families, using little meat, some cheese, and a lot of beans. This is something that middle-class American has learned recently.

2877 days ago



#### WATERMELLEN



Great blog. We don't have food stamps here -- we have "food banks" where people donate food bought at retail and those in need go and pick it up free, to supplement their cash welfare benefits.

Not good: by definition it's going to be non-fresh for the most part.

And in addition: lots of people needing welfare are unsure of how to cook rice or beans or oatmeal, or lack the cooking facilities. So it tends to be more processed stuff that's requested for donation.

I do see people whom I suspect to be in need, at liquidation or discount stores buying tons of high fat junk food. But: what's cheaper if you're hungry, 100 calories of apples and carrots or 100 calories of potato chips and Kraft Dinner?

2878 days ago

#### BOILHAM



Some good thoughts and opinions in the previous comments.

I often wonder how folks who grew up in affluence form their opinions of the poor? They don't really get to see, with their own eyes, the massive abuse of government welfare and food stamp



programs. Many envision the noble poor, struggling to get by, shamefully accepting the largesse of the taxpayers, by way of government hand outs.

Well, I suppose there are those who fit in that category. But, in my experience, the vast majority of those taking government aid are shameless and do have the entitlement attitude. When some live in a situation long enough, it becomes a way of life, and some find workarounds to that way of life. Trading food stamps for beer, alcohol, cigarettes, material items, and even cash. The children of those types of people suffer. There are few recipients who use the system correctly.

I could give anecdote after anecdote, but that would increase the boredom factor of this post. But, I do have many stories to tell.

That's an opinion of one who has spent lots of time in areas of poverty, observing those recipients. You may view me now as an old curmudgeon, but I'm just reporting my first hand, long term experience.

2878 days ago



**MISCHAKEO**

I like the encouragement approach and think that market concept with food stamps is a good one. Incentives to buy healthy food is a good idea. Not allowing large sodas in New York did not work.

I could not find your article when I clicked, but did find one on 80 percent of the children in the US do not get enough exercise! That is another factor. I would like to see PE implemented daily..right now it is 1/2 an hour twice a week.

Thanks for sharing an interesting topic..

2878 days ago



**FANGFACEKITTY**

Tough topic. I do not think "shaming" works in this instance, but as one of the taxpayers who funds the food stamps/cards/etc. I do think there must be limits and qualification requirements in place for the recipients...no tobacco, no alcohol, no lottery tickets, no gas stations or non-food / personal care items allowed; fast food is kind of iffy. Recipients should have to take nutrition & budgeting classes. I do like that some communities are doing what they can to encourage healthy food choices.

Sorry, this is assistance, not an entitlement. I, like most, have seen too many abuses of the system, too many poor choices or less than optimal choices, and complete lack of regard for price comparison shopping or doing whatever can be done to stretch the card \$\$\$. Not everyone who receives this assistance is like this, but far too many are and far too many see it as their right.

2878 days ago



**HOLLYM48**

Good food for thought again today. I think people should not be hasty to judge when they have not walked that path that some people walk but you are so right about education and encouragement vs shaming. I am sure that some people are down on their luck and already ashamed that they have to use government assistance,

2878 days ago



**WILSONWR**

Because of abuse mentioned by others (restaurants, gas stations, etc) , I can see placing restrictions on food stamps, but not on the type of food purchased. Incentives to buy more healthy foods, though, are a great idea. These folks can then get more for their money and eat well too!

2878 days ago



**DARLY55**

I really like the idea of doubling their dollars on produce! And the idea of educating those who have no clue as to what healthy eating really is, is crucial. Having had conversations this past 17 years with some of the worst "food offenders" I have ever met - die hard southern born and raised "foodies", turning around a whole culture is a huge job. It has always had to be deep fried, full of lard, fatback, butter and sugar etc. If you have ever had true, southern style "sweet tea" you know what I mean! But there has been progress, and the huge improvement in the farmer's markets has been a good sign.

Thanks for taking an interest in my blog! It is very interesting seeing all the points of view on such a tough subject.

2878 days ago



**SENIMMO**

My community had a similar program this year at our Farmers Market. The local medical center matched funds for vendor tokens to buy produce. It was expected to last all summer. They are already out of matching funds. To me, that proves that people ARE using healthier options, when they can afford to.

Have a wonderful week!

2878 days ago

**PICKIE98**

that law is about opposite of Michigan. Here, people are allowed to use the bridge cards in restaurants, GAS STATIONS, party stores. These are places that I cannot afford to buy foodstuffs.



I work full time and see people buying steaks, deli meats, pies, fancy cakes,etc with bridge cards. Very seldom do I see fixings for salads, fresh produce... no coupons either.. I save about \$50-\$80 each trip in coupons when I shop. Some very intelligent person in the government suggested nutrition and coking classes, budgeting for anybody receiving food stamps,, it would be a requirement.. they could get four times the foodstuffs if they did.. guess how far that got???

Let me see: We go to work every day. We have a large portion of the money we earned, taken out for taxes.

We pay people to enact the laws for stamps, we pay for people to MAKE the bridge cards, we pay for caseworkers and all of THEIR benefits,we pay for the free medical care and FREE grants, we pay for the handling and security of all of it..BUT SOME recipients are offended and indignant because we question how the "entitled ones" spend and qualify for taking and using our money?

Perhaps they are the ones we should put back in the old way:just give them surplus foods from the government,, nothing else.

2878 days ago

Comment edited on: 7/28/2013 8:23:56 AM



**NIKKILYNG**

Good read, I've never thought of it that way. Love the links!  
2878 days ago



**KELLIEBEAN**

Another great thought-provoking blog. I read Daryl55's blog yesterday and had to think about it.

I don't feel government should intrude on our lives unless we are hurting others but at the same time, just as I was years ago, people receiving government assistance should use it responsibly.

Forcing a family to pay the expense of whole, healthy foods when processed foods help stretch that budget and feed your family seems harsh.

Something like what the Virginia Dept of Health is doing will help a struggling family choose whole, healthy foods and still be able to feed their family.

I would love to see a program like this spread!

2878 days ago



**SANDYCRANE**

Interesting blog. I live in southwest Michigan and attended a farmers market on Saturday. This particular market was in a very upscale area. There were signs posted everywhere encouraging people to use their Bridge cards. I also noticed that the produce was marked up as compared to the grocery store. I could not imagine too many used a Bridge card at that place. Obesity is definitely rampant. It is almost like it is accepted especially with young people. They don't really try to conceal anything. I can remember as a teen being so embarrassed that I had a roll of fat on my stomach and I wore a cover up at the beach for that reason. Do not know the answers to all this but just take baby steps. I am also very glad I found Spark People.



2878 days ago



**NELLJONES**

I don't know about "shaming" but with drugs and alcohol it's called "intervention". Intervention is always seen as "shaming" by the alcoholic, who is always in denial, the primary symptom of alcoholism. No matter how loving, how desperate those who love the addict try to be, the addict will always see it as criticism. The fat person is always well aware of being fat. There may be denial in terms of the solution, but not the problem. Alcoholics always think they just have a few now and again.

2878 days ago



## Add Your Comment to the Blog Post

Leave encouragement, a question, or anything else relevant to this post. All blog comments must abide by SparkPeople's [Community Guidelines](#).

Subscribe to this blog

ADD AN EMOTICON

SPELL CHECK

**Post Comment**

Disclaimer: Weight loss results will vary from person to person. No individual result should be seen as a typical result of following the SparkPeople program.