

Food Check-Out Week Spotlights Nutritious, Healthy Food

WASHINGTON, D.C., February 22, 2010—During [Food Check-Out Week](#) (Feb. 21-27), farmer and rancher members of many local Farm Bureaus will reach out to consumers in their communities with information and cost-saving tips on putting nutritious meals on the table.

“Stretching Your Grocery Dollar With Healthy, Nutritious Food,” the official theme of Farm Bureau’s Food Check-Out Week, reflects the fact that Americans from all walks of life continue to experience an economic squeeze. Dining out less often and preparing more meals at home is typical for growing numbers of Americans.

“As today’s tough economic times continue, public health experts remain concerned that consumers may resort to buying less-nutritious foods that lack essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients,” said Terry Gilbert, a Kentucky farmer and chair of the [AFB Women’s Leadership Committee](#).

“During this week, we are focusing on providing consumers with information on stretching their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food. Tips for better nutrition on a stretched budget, making sense of food labels and understanding USDA’s MyPyramid are among the topics Farm Bureau members will be talking about with consumers, at supermarket demonstration stations and other venues,” said Gilbert.

The Food Check-Out Week connection between Farm Bureau and Ronald McDonald House Charities began more than a decade ago. Since the program was initiated in the mid-1990s, Farm Bureau members have donated around \$3 million in food and monetary contributions to Ronald McDonald Houses and other worthwhile charities during Food Check-Out Week.

“By continuing to make donations during Food Check-Out Week to local Ronald McDonald Houses, as well as other charities, we’re doing our part to help these worthy organizations provide the people they serve with healthy foods on a stretched budget,” said Gilbert. “America’s farmers and ranchers are committed to producing safe, healthy food, but do share with consumers the same issues of putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget.”

A number of studies have shown that rising energy costs for processing, packaging and transportation were the driving forces behind increased retail food prices over the past few years, Gilbert noted. However, retail food prices have actually decreased compared to last year.

On behalf of the American Farm Bureau, Gilbert and the committee donated \$2,500, as well as food, to Ronald McDonald Charities Wichita (Kan.) They were joined at the Wichita event by representatives of the Kansas Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committee, Kansas Farm Bureau President Steve Baccus, AFBF President Bob Stallman and Gabe Ottolini, manager of development for Ronald McDonald House Charities Global. Ronald McDonald Houses provide a “home-

away-from-home” for the families of seriously ill children receiving medical treatment at area hospitals.

Cade and Amanda Rensink, Farm Bureau members in Kansas, learned firsthand about Ronald McDonald Houses in 2009, when their son was born three months premature, weighing just 2 pounds, 11 ounces. Callan was in a neonatal intensive care unit for several weeks while his parents stayed at a Ronald McDonald House in Wichita.

“We could not have done it without Ronald McDonald House,” said Amanda.

“Having a comfortable, home-like place to stay during such a difficult time made all the difference in the world. The support we received from the staff and volunteers was just wonderful.”

Participating county and state Farm Bureaus will hold similar events throughout Food Check-Out Week. Links to state Farm Bureau Web sites may be found at: <http://www.fb.org/state/>.

New this year, AFBF and the Soybean Checkoff launched a joint Facebook fan page to promote Food Check-Out Week. AFBF will donate \$1 to the Galveston (Texas) Ronald McDonald House for every person who becomes a fan of the page by the end of February, up to \$5,000. The house sustained major structural damage during Hurricane Ike. People may become a fan of the page by visiting: www.facebook.com/NationalFoodCheckoutWeek.

Other Food Check-Out Week events in Wichita this week include the AFB Women's Leadership Committee staffing supermarket demonstration stations at Leeker's Foods and being joined by the Kansas Farm Bureau Women's Committee to give presentations at elementary schools about where food comes from.

The third week of February was selected for Food Check-Out Week as a bridge to National Nutrition Month in March.