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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NEW NUTRITION PROGRAM SUPPORTS LOW-INCOME SENIORS, FARMERS

### Coupon Books Still Available for Purchasing Fresh, Local Produce

YPSILANTI, Mich., July 20, 2007—A new nutrition program that supports low-income seniors and local farmers in Washtenaw County is in full swing this summer, offering participants the opportunity to offset the cost of fresh, locally grown produce.

Senior Project FRESH, which is sponsored by the MSU Extension, the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, and the Washtenaw County Public Health Department, provides seniors with \$20 worth of coupons that can be used at farmers' markets and roadside stands to purchase fresh, Michigan-grown produce. In all, 150 coupon books will be distributed this market season in Washtenaw County. So far, 90 coupons books have been distributed to Washtenaw County seniors.

**Two more coupon registration days are planned on Tuesday, July 24<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Towne Centre Place, 401 W. Michigan Ave., and on Thursday July 26<sup>th</sup> from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Ypsilanti Senior Center, 1015 N. Congress.** Seniors must bring a picture ID and proof of income (pay stub or tax return) to Registration Day. Registration is held on a first-come, first-serve basis, so seniors are urged to arrive early, as only a limited number of spots remain.

Touting the economic benefits of the program for both farmers and older adults, Katie Loveland, Senior Project FRESH Coordinator at the MSU Extension, said: "Because of Senior Project FRESH, \$3,000 worth of produce will be in the hands of low-income seniors this summer and in the pockets of local farmers." Last summer, Senior Project FRESH served 7,500 older adults in 36 Michigan Counties. Many of these adults were at risk of being nutritionally deficient. This summer, Senior Project FRESH plans to provide fresh fruits and veggies to an estimated 10,000 senior adults in 45 Michigan counties.

For the pilot year of the program in Washtenaw County, organizers have chosen to target older adults in Ypsilanti because the city has fewer grocery stores and other produce vendors than other areas of the county. Despite the limited number of healthy food outlets in Ypsilanti, Loveland said that, "Older adults in Ypsilanti care deeply about eating healthy, locally grown food. Seniors have been some of our best customers at the Downtown and Depot Town Farmers' Markets, and we hope this program will increase their access to and awareness of health food options in the city."

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