

# FARM TO HOSPITAL CASE STUDY NO. 4

## Kaiser Permanente, California, Hawaii and Oregon

### *Multiple farmers markets/farm stands*

#### **Purpose**

Increase access to fresh, healthy foods and encourage incorporation of healthy foods into diet. Target audience varies among facilities with some serving staff primarily and others staff, patients and the local community.

#### **Summary**

Over the last two years, health leaders at Kaiser Permanente (KP), a large nonprofit health plan headquartered in Oakland, Calif., have started 14



farmers markets and farm stands at medical facilities in California, Oregon and Hawaii with a goal to have 29 markets in place by the end of 2005. The success of the markets has spurred a change in KP's overall approach to providing food for patients, staff and the communities they serve, emphasizing issues of freshness, nutritional value, reduced chemical inputs and sustainability. Ultimate goals include enhanced staff morale and meeting their health mission by improving the food and eating of staff, patients and the surrounding community.

#### **Background**

Dr. Preston Maring, a physician at Kaiser's Oakland (Calif.) Medical Center with an interest in food, thought his hospital should provide an alternative to the usual hospital lobby vendors, one more consistent with its health care mission. Momentum took over, and within a short time, Dr. Maring had formed a committee that eventually led to the launching of Kaiser's first on-site farmers market in May 2003. Since then several more markets and farm stands have started at KP facilities.

Mild climates in California and Hawaii permit KP's farmers markets and farm stands to provide fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables on a weekly basis all year long. Some of them feature local organic producers approved by the California Certified Organic Farmers Association. This allows KP to meet dual goals of protecting the environment by supporting sustainable agriculture while improving access to healthy, affordable food in and around KP facilities. Each facility also offers an opportunity to further educate KP members, staff and the local community about the benefits of healthful eating, often tying in with an existing in-hospital program.



Logistics: Farmers markets at KP facilities vary in their unique setups, in particular with respect to their hours of operation, costs and stated focus. But their establishment and successful operation have had many shared features, including:

- ▶ Minimal out-of-pocket costs, such as for permits, although staff time invested can be significant.

- ▶ Buy-in secured from key KP leaders, such as the leaders in the food service area, operations, community and government relations, public affairs and legal departments, as well as from any cafeteria or coffee cart that operates on-site.
- ▶ Effective community partners. Successful operations benefit from a community intermediary who manages and coordinates the market's operation, including securing permits, getting produce from farms to site, setting up the market, garbage disposal, etc.
- ▶ Support from internal partners including legal review and promotion of the market internally to staff and KP members through newsletters and Web site, and externally to the community via press releases, meetings, articles, etc. Typical markets also have an important health/nutritional education component developed by KP experts.
- ▶ Cooperation and buy-in from neighborhood restaurants and associations, grocery stores and civic leaders.

### Costs

Operating costs for the markets have been minimal for the most part, depending on permit costs and the scope of the effort. Permits are mostly free, although one facility paid \$1,300. Other costs include banners and other marketing, educational materials and tables.

### Benefits

- ▶ Increases access to healthy foods.
- ▶ Encourages incorporation of healthy foods into diet.
- ▶ Supports local growers by providing non-week-end market opportunities.
- ▶ Generates goodwill.
- ▶ Creates new community partnerships.
- ▶ Promotes association between KP, health and nutrition.
- ▶ Educational component piggy backs on other KP programs.
- ▶ Saves staff time on weekends, enhancing morale and perhaps avoiding absenteeism on Fridays.

### Future developments

The existing markets are generating interest within the KP system for markets in other states including Colorado and Michigan. In addition, KP is developing a comprehensive food policy that not only encourages the expansion of farm stands and farmers markets to other facilities, but also broadens the scope of sustainable agriculture to include food served to patients and staff within KP facilities.

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Or see "Produce to the People" by Preston Maring, MD, KP organizer of the first market. <http://xnet.kp.org/permanentejournal/spring04/produce.html>



Excerpted from *Healthy Food, Healthy Hospitals, Healthy Communities: Stories of Health Care Leaders Bringing Fresher, Healthier Food Choices to their Patients, Staff and Communities* by Marie Kulick (May 2005).

### Read the full report at [iatp.org/foodandhealth](http://iatp.org/foodandhealth)

IATP is a member of Health Care Without Harm, an international coalition of 433 organizations in 52 countries working to transform the health care industry so it is no longer a source of harm to people and the environment. This report was developed to inform our joint efforts to transform hospital food purchasing.

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