



Supporting community-based food systems in Northeast Ohio

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CountrySide Farmers' Markets' Alternative Currency
Gets Boost from National Organization**

Wholesome Wave support expands purchasing power of area low-income families

Peninsula, Ohio – CountrySide Conservancy is excited to announce their partnership with Wholesome Wave in their Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP). The DVCP, which CountrySide Farmers' Markets is dubbing "CountrySide Carrot Cash," increases the fruit and vegetable purchasing power of area families participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. The program enables participants to receive a dollar for dollar match, up to \$20, when they use their Ohio Direction Card to shop at the CountrySide Farmers' Markets. The "CountrySide Carrot Cash" can be spent only on fruits and vegetables, as the aim of the program is to improve the overall nutritional content of the meals of low-income families.

Wholesome Wave fosters strong linkages between local agriculture and under-served communities, and its partnership with CountrySide Conservancy marks its first foray into Ohio. States with existing Double Value Coupon Programs include California, Connecticut, Washington D.C., Pennsylvania, Oregon, Massachusetts and nearly 20 others. "We are proud to be partnering with CountrySide Conservancy," said Michel Nischan, Wholesome Wave Co-Founder and CEO. "This is a great relationship that ensures underserved communities in Northeast Ohio have access to fresh, locally grown and affordable fruits and vegetables."

CountrySide Farmers' Markets have been accepting the Ohio Direction Card since 2009, and have seen an increase of 31% in EBT sales between then and now. "With so many families either out of work or underemployed, these kinds of programs can really help a struggling family eat nutritionally sound meals," states market manager, Beth Knorr. "I'm excited to see how the CountrySide Carrot Cash is received by our EBT customers, and how it could increase their vegetable intake, not to mention the impact it could have on the local farmers we serve."

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The partnership with Countryside is part of Wholesome Wave's expansion of its incentive programs in as many as 30 farmers markets across the country, with support from Oakland, Calif.-based Kaiser Permanente. With funding from a \$1.2 million grant from the non-profit health care organization, Wholesome Wave has expanded its DVCP program in Ohio, California, Georgia, the Mid-Atlantic region, Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, and Colorado.

The Countryside Carrot Cash program launched at the November 19th farmers' market, and will continue through the Countryside Winter Farmers' Market and throughout the 2012 market season. The 2011-2012 Countryside Winter Farmers' Markets will be held at Old Trail School, 2315 Ira Road, Akron, Ohio 44333, on December 10 & 17; January 14; February 4 & 18; March 3 & 17; and April 7 & 28. Market hours are 9am until noon.

Additionally, participating local farmers are increasing the amount of produce being grown for these winter markets with the addition of high tunnels to their farms, diversifying the array of products available well beyond potatoes and winter squash. In addition to increased amounts of fresh produce, customers can also expect to find artisan breads, croissants, jams and jellies, maple syrup, honey, fresh pasta and ravioli, nut rolls, cookies, chocolates, eggs, beef, pork, bison, lamb, and cheese. Also available will be handcrafted soaps and balms, jewelry, herbs, fresh-roasted coffee and locally blended teas. More than 50 vendors will be participating throughout the winter market season.

At Countryside Conservancy we envision Northeast Ohio filled with thriving farming and food entrepreneurs: where farms are viable businesses, farmland is a treasured resource, and local food is commonplace. We support up-and-coming farmers, share innovative land-use and business models, facilitate networking opportunities and advocate community-based agriculture. We connect communities and farmers, provide alternate market choices, and create venues that foster civic engagement through fun and informal education. For more information visit www.cvcountryside.org, and follow us on Facebook.

Wholesome Wave fosters strong linkages between local agriculture and under-served communities. Our goal is a more vibrant and equitable food system for all people. Wholesome Wave programs improve the accessibility and affordability of healthful, locally grown fruits and vegetables. We reach over 25 states, working with 50 community-based organizations that manage 230 farm-to-retail venues, and impact over 1,700 participating farms. This network of partners works in concert to transform current realities in the American food system. Visit www.wholesomewave.org to learn more. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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