

MY VIEW PAM WALKER

Healthy food can be accessible at the Farmers Market

By Pam Walker Apr 3, 2023 Updated 9 hrs ago



Farmers markets are often perceived as elitist. “The prices!” many say. “They’re so high! Only rich people can afford food there!” But in fact, the Santa Fe Farmers Market Institute — the nonprofit that supports the Santa Fe Farmers Market by providing it with a permanent home and a professional development programs for farmers — invests substantially in making fresh, local food accessible to low-income members of our community.

Why does the institute do this? Because good health begins with nutritious food, and the most nutritious food is locally grown and fresh from the field. Eating it should not be limited to the rich but accessible to all.

How does the institute do this? It administers, through a debit card and token system, the purchases of people in the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program along with Double Up Food Bucks, which matches SNAP purchases dollar for dollar, doubling buying power. The institute also administers a “Fresh Rx” program, which addresses diet-related illnesses. Participating medical providers write prescriptions for patients to redeem for tokens and buy fresh produce.

The Institute spent \$97,200 in 2022 alone administering these programs, distributing a total of \$363,000 in tokens through 4,600 transactions. This represents an increase of 144% from the \$149,022 distributed in 2019, the year before the pandemic. It reflects the increased need for food assistance the pandemic brought, as many people lost jobs, homes or fell ill. To address this rising food insecurity, Congress raised SNAP allotments in 2020, the main factor in the surge of SNAP and food bucks transacted by the Institute.

The increased SNAP allotments prompted by the pandemic ended March 1, reducing monthly SNAP allocations by a minimum of \$95 per person and \$250 per household. SNAP participants are losing, on average, 30% to 40% of their benefits. The average reduction for more than 250,000 New Mexicans is \$6 per person per day. These reductions come as inflation has caused food prices to rise by 11% since 2021.

The cuts, combined with inflation, underscore the critical value of the institute making food as accessible as possible to low-income people in our community. Eating a healthful diet of fresh, local food is now more challenging than ever.

An older man who never expected to need food assistance said during the pandemic he had to have knee surgery, and there were complications. He lost his job and enrolled in SNAP.

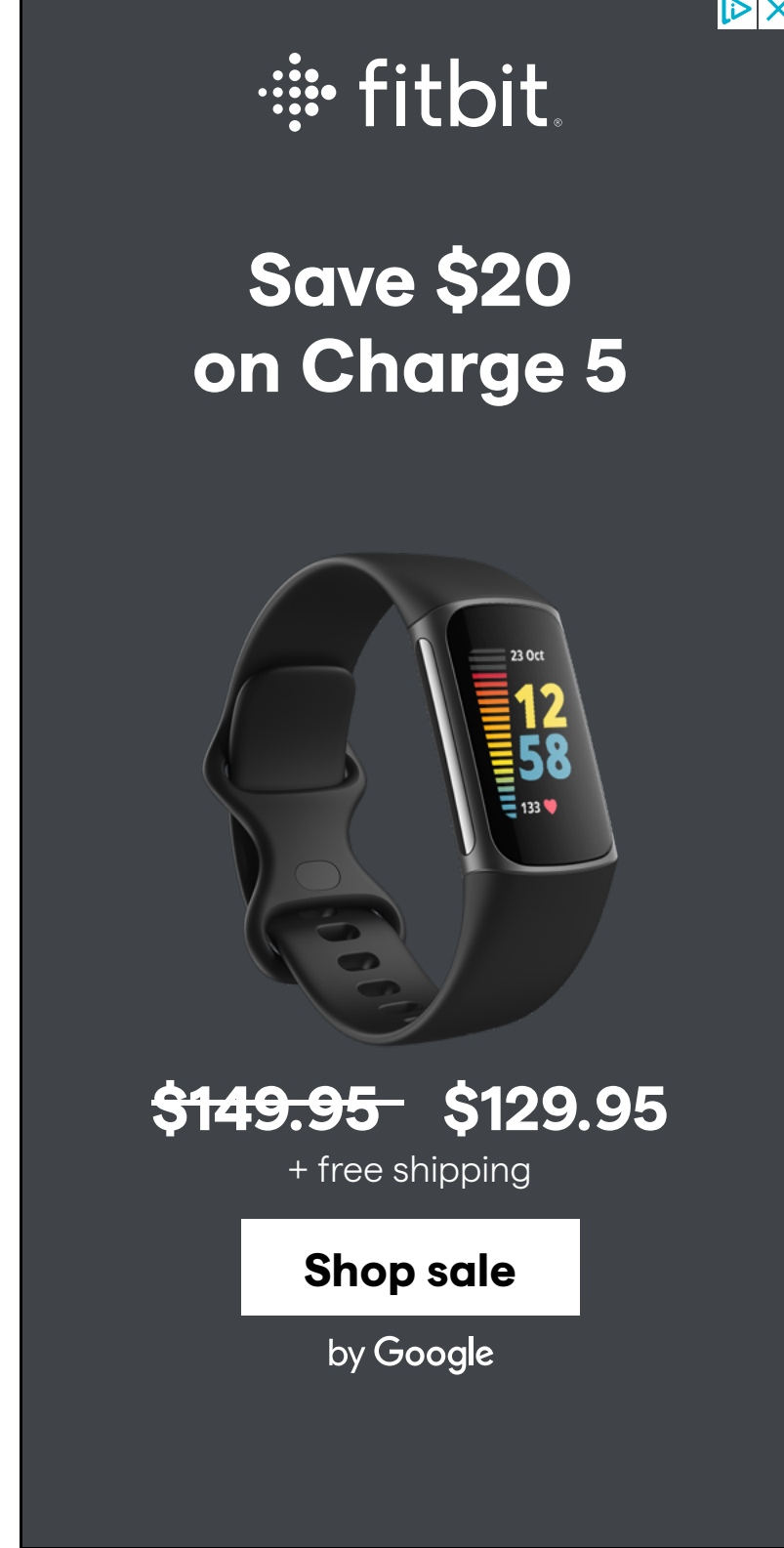
“I take care of my 99-year-old father,” he said at a recent market. “We want to eat healthy and keep buying our food here. SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks are lifesavers.” Many others express similar sentiments and concerns.

The institute’s investment in food assistance programs helps farmers, too. It brings them customers they wouldn’t otherwise have. Dixon farmer and writer Stan Crawford says, “SNAP helps two tiers of low-income people. SNAP enables low-income customers to shop at our farmers market. And it enables farmers, also low-income, to charge prices that allow them to stay in business.”

Those prices! Yet our farmers, as Crawford says, are low-income, and many are themselves enrolled in SNAP. How fair is this?

Would you like to see greater fairness in our food community? The institute urges you to support our work in bringing everyone to the table, in nourishing everyone’s health, especially those who can’t afford to come without assistance. How? Donate money or time (we welcome volunteers) or both. Find more information at farmersmarketinstitute.org. And let’s contact New Mexico’s congressional delegation. Let’s tell them exactly how the reduction in SNAP benefits is affecting our community’s ability to eat nutritiously and manage its health.

Pam Walker has been a local farm and food activist for 25 years. She serves as vice chair of the Santa Fe Farmers Market board of directors.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2023 Santa Fe International Literary Festival
May 19, 2023 at 5:30 PM to May 21, 2023 at 7:45 PM
Santa Fe Community Convention Center
Santa Fe, New Mexico
[Get Tickets](#)

Powered by Red Zia Events

NEWSLETTER SIGN UP

Stay up to date on the latest news and the local entertainment scene by subscribing to The New Mexican's email lists.

- Morning Headlines**
Receive a list of headlines from the latest edition of *The New Mexican* in your inbox every morning.
- Pasatiempo Newsletter**
Get the highlights from Santa Fe's weekly magazine of arts, entertainment and culture each Friday.
- Offers and Promos**
Contests and special offers from The Santa Fe New Mexican and advertising partners.

Enter email address

[Sign up](#) [Manage your lists](#)

NEW MEXICO COVID-19 FIGURES

Total Cases	Total Deaths	New Cases	New Deaths
675,518	9,127	408	12

Source: N.M. Department of Health. Last updated: April 3. New cases and deaths include totals from Saturday-Monday.

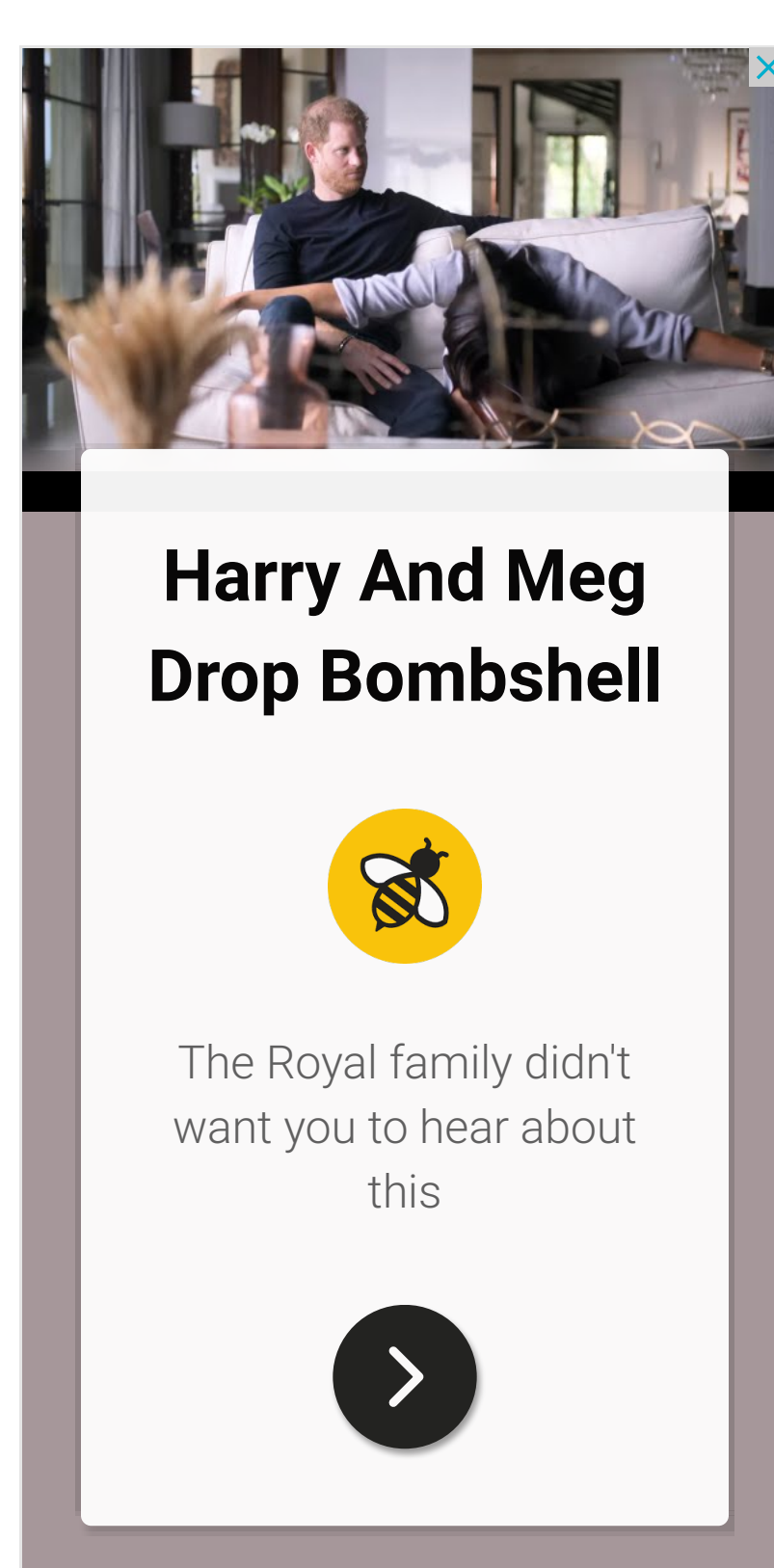


MOST POPULAR

- Articles
- 1. 'Bone in the ground' turns out to be big fossil find
- 2. Jambo Bobcat Bite readies for opening
- 3. Peake's exit ends dark chapter in NMSU history
- 4. There's no shortage of sandwich options in Santa Fe
- 5. Mora 20-year-old accused of killing older brother
- 6. West Alameda Street closed to repair road collapse
- 7. Santa Fe County firefighters report they were shot at while responding to fire on BLM land
- 8. La Mama cafe will fill former Josie's Casa de Comida house
- 9. Trump polarizes nation; his case revives rancor in New Mexico
- 10. Santa Fe artist turns spilled coffee moment into painting dog portraits

COLUMNISTS & BLOGS

- JAMES BARRON
Time for Mountain West to say farewell to San Diego State
- HOLY TRINITY OF FINANCE
Tips and tricks for taxes
- RINGSIDE SEAT
Trump polarizes nation; his case revives rancor in New Mexico
- BY THE WAY
Jim Jordan: Statesman or demagogue?



SECTIONS

- Home
- News
- Sports
- Opinion
- Pasatiempo
- Magazines
- Life
- Multimedia
- Commenting FAQ

SERVICES

- Place Classified Ad
- Subscription Services
- Submission Forms
- Featured Ads
- Featured Ads Reprints
- Open House Listings
- Open House Re-Prints
- Commercial Printing
- Ad Rates
- Work at The New Mexican

CONTACT INFORMATION

santafenewmexican.com
P.O. Box 2048
Santa Fe, NM 87504-2048
Phone: 505-983-3303
Email: webeditor@sfnemexican.com

FOLLOW US

