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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cherry Avenue Auction Goes High-Tech:

Customers can now use Food Stamps to buy fresh produce and other eligible food items

Fresno, CA, July 8th, 2006 – This Saturday, Cherry Avenue Auction will begin accepting Food Stamp Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, also known as the Golden State Advantage Card, as a convenient method of payment. **Cherry Avenue is one of the first flea markets in the nation to include the Food Stamp EBT program.**

“We know that low-income families in Fresno have trouble buying fresh fruits and vegetables because healthy food is one of the last things a family will purchase. First they will pay for shelter, utilities and medicine,” said Jeremy Hofer, of Fresno Metro Ministry’s Hunger and Nutrition Project. “Food Stamps help families meet their nutritional needs – and we need to encourage their use at farmers markets where healthy food is in abundance!”

When the food stamp program went electronic, vendors at farmers markets nationwide were left out. The new EBT technology presented a unique challenge for these vendors because of the need for high-tech machinery. This Saturday vendors at Cherry Avenue Auction will once again be accepting food stamps – in the form of wooden tokens! Here’s how it works:

Utilizing a point-of-sale device provided by the state’s Department of Social Services, market staff swipe a food stamp participant’s EBT Card and deduct a chosen amount from his or her account. Customers are issued market scrip in the form of wooden tokens equivalent to the deducted amount. These tokens can then be used to purchase eligible food items from participating vendors. Any unused scrip may be redeemed at a later date, or returned to market staff to be credited back to the participant’s EBT account.

The new EBT service and an emphasis on the wide variety of foods available at the market are being featured in a new advertising campaign promoting the Market. Neil Burson, co-owner of Cherry Avenue Auction says his vendors are excited about the availability of EBT and expect an increase in sales. In preparation, all of the produce vendors have been moved to one section of the market. Burson describes it as a “farmers market within an outdoor shopping mall”. For years produce vendors have generally been scattered throughout the market; now customers will be able to purchase all of their food in one place: “Vegetable Row”.

Press Conference

Saturday, July 8th, 2006 10:00 am

At Cherry Avenue Auction

4640 S Cherry Ave - 41 south, exit Central Ave, right on Cherry

Speakers:

Jeremy Hofer, Fresno Metro Ministry

Neil Burson, Co-owner, Cherry Avenue Auction

Eustolia Zamora-Bonilla, Program Coordinator,

Latino 5-a-Day

Visuals: Customers using EBT cards & purchasing produce.

The Farmers Market EBT Outreach Project is a cooperative effort between Fresno Metro Ministry, USDA Food and Nutrition Services, California Department of Social Services, and the California Nutrition Network, and part of a statewide campaign to improve health through improved access to local fruits and vegetables, particularly among socioeconomic and ethnic groups that suffer disproportionate rates of hunger, obesity and chronic disease.

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