

Musings from the Market

It was just seven weeks ago that we started the St. Alban's Farmers Market. We started with only three vendors: fried pies, plants, and fresh eggs. Who would have known that on that first day we would have 90 to 100 cars passing through? It was amazing but unfortunately most of the customers were looking for fresh produce. Slowly (or not so slowly considering that we have only been operating for seven weeks) we are up to twelve vendors. We now have produce, fresh eggs, honey, Turkey and Beef jerky, hair bows, pottery, homemade dog treats (my dogs can vouch for them), plants for the yard, herb plants (and later this year herbal mixes and cookies, yum), and new this coming week Angus beef and pork sausage! And they are all doing a decent business.

Mary Paffe, George and I have been there every Saturday and have watched the steady progression of 'regulars' coming every Saturday. They seem to have their favorite vendors and if for some reason the vendor doesn't show up they are upset. We have gotten many thank you's from the customers for starting this venture. As for the vendors we have become a small community ourselves. When you are there for four hours at a time you do a lot of socializing. They are a very nice group of people and all have their own stories. We have some vendors that are just making it and some who own their own business. But they all are dedicated to selling good products at a fair price. And they are a very giving group; they have shared produce, plants, and food with all of us. One vendor, Charlie, who just makes it himself, found out that I have a son who lives in an Orange Grove group home. He always leaves me a package of produce to take to the home.

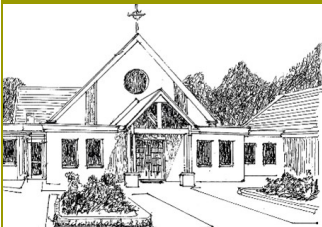
We learned the hard way about regulations and the difference between processed foods vs. produce. There seem to be rules and regulations for everything! We ended up having to let the fried pie vendor go for not having a permit and an inspected kitchen. But on a happy note, his wife (and co-owner) is expecting and they are not doing business during this time.

We had our first ever vendor meeting a few weeks ago. We established guidelines for the current and future vendors and as a group decided that we would stay open until the week before Thanksgiving and then OPEN again next year the week after Easter. I am very confident that we will have even more vendors next year.

I go to the Main Street Market on Wednesday's and am now a 'regular'. Some of the vendors know me by name. It is great to talk to the people producing my food and know it is local. Not to mention fresh, fresh is so good! Our vendors love to talk about their products as well.

What you can do is of course shop, but also pass the word around. If you live in a subdivision or community that has a newsletter or regular meetings, make sure we are mentioned. Consider placing our flyer at your place of work or favorite haunt. One shopper (and a new community gardener) found us when Sara Barys placed a flyer at Panera Bread. And consider helping on a Saturday. That consists of setup (place signs on road, unlock gate on gold point entrance, unlock side door on patio, make coffee for vendors, set up information table), just being there for questions and to represent our church, and of course take down (reverse of setup). Or just come by for a little while.

Dee Clark



St. Alban's Episcopal Church

