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29 March, 2024

Returning, New, and Potential Culver Farmers' Market Vendors,

It's hard to believe it's already time for the summer farmers' market season! With the exception of a couple of weeks there, the winter weather was very mild. Perhaps a bit too mild, as our cherry bushes are already in full bloom, crocuses are already done, and daffodils are in decline. Ramps are just starting to poke their little leaves up. We've even heard tales of morel harvests starting a couple of weeks ago!

And it's been a busy winter for the market. Sales were odd, not following the usual pattern (with January being better than December for many vendors. What's up with that?!). And our marketing efforts really taking flight. We've seen a huge increase in subscribers and followers on the market's social media, as well as increased engagement.

Which brings us to something I'd like to highlight in this year's letter. The market team!

For most of the past several years, the market management team has really just been myself managing the market itself and the vendors, and Tracy Fox managing marketing and community outreach. But over the past year, some of our vendor family has stepped into leadership roles, meaning we now have a proper staff.

First, Sandy Amor, of Amor Gardens and Pork stepped up to manage the Tuesday evening market, as my schedule had me stretched too thin to keep that up. Then, Candice Crum of EverRed Rustic began managing our social media marketing. Both of these folks have had a huge positive influence on the market, and we all benefit from their hard work!

Which means vendors will be interacting with more folks now. Over the winter, Candice began managing a group text to keep track of vendors' special efforts each week. That lets her push out timely information on vendors' sales, seasonal specials, etc. I'm not sure if/how she plans to continue that in the summer season (the texting group could get exceptionally large…), but keep an eye out for communications from her on how to get your special news out. It not only helps you get the most eyes on your news, but also keeps people aware of how vibrant and dynamic our market is!

Moving on to the market itself, the newly renovated space proved very popular with market patrons and most vendors last year. We will keep the same layout this season. But there are several vendors who would like to change to different spaces. As always, any full-season vendor wishing to keep the same spot will be allowed to do so. Those wishing to move to a new spot will be given the opportunity to do so via a lottery based on their past involvement in the market.

So, if you're planning to be a full-season vendor, please be careful to choose the correct answer for your on the booth space checkbox. The deadline for vendors wishing to keep the same space will be April 26. At that point, any spaces not claimed by returning vendors will be assumed to be available.

Now, all of the announcements:

There are essentially no vendors still using the online Culver Farmers' Market store via LocalLine. So we have dropped support for it. If you market your products online via your own website, include info about your online presence so it is available for marketing or if customers ask

Remember that the market is registered to **accept WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks.** They've recently restructured that program, and it requires additional effort and an electronic device now. I

went through the process last year, and will do my best to help if anyone wishes to undertake that effort this year. I'd suggest starting sooner rather than later – it took a couple of months of waiting. But, with inflation being part of every conversation lately, these programs could very well be important for a growing number of our patrons.

Speaking of inflation, we've kept **Market fees** the same for several years. Alas, we can no longer afford to do so. The fees will be:

- First-time vendors on their first week: Free
- Local non-profits: Free.
- Saturday reserved space: $130 in advance, or, $15/week for 10 weeks.
- Tuesday reserved space: $25 in advance, or, $5/week for 6 weeks.
- Saturday occasional space: $15/week.
- Tuesday occasional space: $5/week.
- Pavilion surcharge (Saturday regular vendors only): $100, payable by the first market day.

I'll close with an overview of **important market dates** and contact info:

- April 26 Deadline for returning vendors to reserve the same spot.
- May 11 : Opening day! (Mother's Day Weekend)
- May 28: Opening day of Tuesday Market
- Jul 19-21: Lake Fest
- Jul 27: Lions Club Corn Roast/Fireman's Festival
- Aug 10: Lake Max Triathlon
- Aug 27: Last day of Tuesday Market
- Sep 27-29: Culver Paint Out
- Oct 21: Last day of the Summer Market
- Oct 25: Culver Fall Fest
- Nov 2: First day of the Winter Market!

Advance payments can be made by check, payable to Culver Farmers' Market. Please mail to:

Culver Farmers' Market
c/o Hole in the Woods Farm
6738 E 750 N
Culver, IN 46511

The application form is available at https://holeinthewoodsfarm.com/cfm-vendor

For vendor questions, contact Chad at chad@holeinthewoodsfarm.com or 833-574-FOOD (3663).

Questions about advertising and marketing, contact Tracy at tracy@foodnutritionpolicy.com . Do be sure to let her know about your booth and anything exciting going on there! And remember to follow us on Facebook and Instagram!

Weekly/timely info for marketing your products or events, contact Candice at mitchandcandice@gmail.com .

Here's to a great season!

Chad Gard

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