

Shop Bedford Farmer's Market for in-season produce and more!

By Jackie Giroux
Reporter

Area shoppers have the opportunity to purchase freshly picked in-season produce every Saturday at the Bedford Farmer's Market. The market is located in the parking lot at the Lambertville United Methodist Church at the corner of Douglas and Dean roads. Hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. through the end of October, rain or shine unless there is heavy rain and/or wind and lightning.

In addition to vegetables and fruits, shoppers will find other vendors at the market as well, which can vary. The size of the market can also fluctuate. "The number of vendors can vary with the season," said Linda Johnson, market manager.

Bob Potter, longtime Tucker Farm vendor and board treasurer explained the criteria for having a booth at the Bedford Farmer's Market, "The Farmer's Market was originally primarily food-related products. It was opened up to anything a vendor grows or makes or creates themselves. They can use store-bought items and then create something themselves. The market has gotten bigger by adding these products and also services." Potter gave an example of a service as a lady starting a massage business. She came to the market as a vendor and did five-minute massages to help to build a customer base for her new business.

"The mix of vendors has changed over the years. We've had fruits, vegetables, mush-

rooms, coffee products, baked goods, jams and jellies, furniture, knitted goods, craft items, maple syrup, honey and wood-working products like cutting boards," he said.

Potter said that vendors that sell food items have to follow state food safety rules and cottage food laws. He added that the Farmer's Market has been inspected by the Department of Agriculture and the state. "We want customers to be assured that what they are buying is safe," he said.

Examples of items brought in by vendors for the June 10 market included: vegetable plants, flowers in hanging baskets, produce, leafy greens, jams, fresh roasted coffee, local honey, strawberries, personalized tumblers, cupcakes, cookies and jewelry. A pretty good variety for early in the season. The food truck was Street Tacos Toledo.

As a manager, Johnson will be looking for ways to add to or improve the Farmer's Market to bring in new vendors and customers. "We have a lot of new vendors including several bakers and food trucks that are new to us. I think one of the most important changes is we are bringing back the customer newsletter. Social media is really important in getting the word out about the vendors and what products they offer, or what produce is in season locally. We use the newsletter to communicate with the community about what we offer," Johnson said. To subscribe to the newsletter, go to the market's website bedfordmi

farmersmarket.com. There is also a food truck calendar on the website.

So that shoppers don't miss out on the fresh fruits or vegetables they are interested in purchasing, Johnson said, "If people aren't sure what is in season locally they can stop by Tucker Farm or Mom's in the Garden booths for a free hand-out showing what produce will be ready when."

If you would like to see a brief tour of the Farmer's Market, Johnson posts a video, when the vendors have set up each Saturday morning, on Bedford Facebook pages as well as on the Bedford Farmer's Market Facebook page. Johnson stops at each booth and shows what is for sale and briefly speaks with the vendor.

Additionally, Johnson is open to holding events during the Saturday markets. "We have a couple of musicians that we are talking to, but haven't set dates yet for them to perform. We are always open to hosting car washes or having community non-profits set up an information booth to widen their reach in the community," she said.

The Bedford Farmer's Market has been in existence longer than many may realize. Potter said that Tucker Farm started as a vendor at the beginning when it was located at the Francis Family YMCA. "In 2016 it moved to the Lambertville United Methodist Church and it has been there ever since. Before 2016, I joined as a board member and in 2017 I became the treasurer and I still am.



The Bedford Farmer's Market, open each Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., is where shoppers can find fresh homegrown produce along with baked goods, honey, jams and jellies and more. Vendors have to have grown it or made it themselves.

Board members are down to two of us now, myself and Ed Rinckey who is president."

Johnson has previously served as manager of the Bedford Farmer's Market. "I was originally certified as a market manager through MIFMA in 2016. The certification program has been around for several years and I thought I could learn a lot from the experts. I managed the market through the 2018 season, and took over the position again this month," she said. Jessica Smotherman had been the market manager, retiring in May when she moved to Florida.

Johnson's experience includes owning a business for almost 15 years when she retired. "I have gardened for more than 40 years. My Polish grandfather and my dad were market farmers in Bedford. They sold at the Eastern Market in Detroit and at the Toledo Farmer's Market. I grow mostly specialty crops

such as lettuce, spinach, kale and arugula in addition to potatoes, peas, and raspberries," she said. Johnson is a weekly vendor at the market; her booth is Mom's in the Garden.

Anyone interested in being a vendor at the Bedford Farmer's Market can find information on the website bedfordmifarmersmarket.com/interested-in-being-a-vendor. "I recently added this year's vendor application as a pdf that people can download. Or, con-

tact the market at thebedfordmarket@gmail.com. Just remember that they have to make it, bake it or grow it to be a vendor," Johnson said.

Potter said that as long as there has been the Bedford Farmer's Market he still finds that people don't know about it. If you are a Bedford Farmer's Market shopper, why not invite a family member, friend or neighbor to come with you and introduce them to shopping at the market!