

Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market had game-changing 2020



Scenes from past years at the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market.



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“Because the guidelines are continuously changing at this point, I would ask that people keep in mind the fact farmers markets carry their own set of guidelines, which is what we need to abide by,” she said. “If people have questions, they can reach out to me directly. I’ll try to post it on our social media sites with the information. Or they can come to the information booth at the market if they have questions in regards to that, as we’re all trying to transition through this time – because it can be challenging – and I just ask that everybody be patient with us, as we try to ourselves adjust as we move along.”

Surprising Success in 2020

Not even a global pandemic could slow Symmonds down.

She pressed on last summer with the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market, even as myriad events, festivals and concerts were canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak.

“I myself once was a small business and, in all honesty, kept thinking to myself, ‘What if I still had that small business today? How would that have impacted my business – my life?’ And it was important to me to give people the opportunity to still be able to have somewhere to go,” she said. “I know people were grateful. ...

“I think, to me, coming out the other side of this pandemic, if I just helped them in some small way whether, again, it was just my market or they found a couple markets to now utilize for their business and find success that way, that’s worth it to me – and to the overall success of the market. By having those additional vendors, it’s good for everybody.”

Symmonds said customers were pleased with the market’s safety measures, the organization of merchants – heck, just having something to do on Saturdays.

“I think vendors got to see the appreciation of the shoppers, of the customers who were coming – and reported back to me how happy the new customers were – especially because a lot of new people found our market – how grateful they were to have this in the Village of Lewiston,” she said. “Some people didn’t even realize we were there. So, again, this opened up a whole new door of people finding us, knowing about us, which, in turn, is great for the vendors. I think that people were pleased – and they were pleased with the overall experience of the market.”

Broderick said, “Many (or most) of the vendors and growers do not have physical, brick-and-mortar locations that are accessible to the public; so with concerts and festivals canceled last year, the market became a much more important avenue to sell their goods. Some of them are focused on eventually opening a physical location, while others are looking to continue mobile vending. Regardless of their direction, many of them experienced numerous years of growth, then suddenly became concerned that their businesses may not survive when the pandemic began.

“In response, we witnessed firsthand how the Lewiston Artisan Farmers Market worked diligently to create a safe environment for all of its customers, while providing a much-needed sales outlet for many of their vendors. It was a complex business environment to navigate

and we know how much that meant for so many.”

Market(ing) Lewiston

Speaking to the Village Board this week, Elizabeth Freck-Belen of Thyme’s Right Organic said, “I’ve been there since the beginning. I find it a very important part of this community. We get members who walk from the village to the market. We have outsiders who are coming in to attend the Lewiston market. We’ve very well established now. We demand that people have locally grown, locally made things. It supports small businesses. It brings people to the village when, otherwise, it’s a little sleepy town on Saturday mornings. And then they stay. They shop in our businesses and they also eat in our restaurants after they come to the market.”

Sonora Miller and her husband, Eran Colbus, operate Beegotten Farm. She told trustees the farmers market has become “vibrant.”

“It’s really exciting,” Miller said. “This past year, just for an example, I had people – remember, this is COVID – driving from Boston, staying overnight in Lewiston, specifically to come to the market. They were doing a market road trip. Then I had people from Chicago. So, we’re getting local and we’re getting very-far-away people who are eating all their meals out, staying overnight in the B&Bs, and coming to the Village of Lewiston for this.”

Ray Wendling of North Ridge Distillery will be a full-time vendor this summer. He said, “In 2020, we wanted to start as a part-time vendor and see how our products were received by the people in Lewiston. Based on our customers’ reactions to our products, it became clear that, in 2021, we wanted to become

a full-time vendor at the Lewiston market.”

Symmonds said, “Lewiston offers a unique experience. It’s more of a community feel, which is what I have heard from many different people – not just the vendors – which is why they like coming and come back each year; but the shoppers, the customers come back. It’s an experience. It’s not just, ‘I’ll run up and grab my fruits and vegetables and head out.’ People come,

see their neighbors, see friends; enjoy the activities in the park, which we’re able to bring back this year; they bring their pets; they spend time; they get a breakfast sandwich; get a coffee; they sit at the benches; they enjoy the park. It’s an actual experience, and I think that’s what sets us apart from other farmers markets.”

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/lewis-tonartisanmarket>.

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