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Farmers Market expands to meet public's demand

By Yadira Betances

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LAWRENCE — A train station and medical clinic might seem like odd places to shop for fresh fruits and vegetables, but Groundwork Lawrence has set up a farmers market at each this summer.

While people still can find fresh produce, flowers and more at the original farmers market on Appleton Way (between Essex and Common streets), they also can shop at the Sen. Patricia McGovern Transportation Center, 211 Merrimack St., and at the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, 216 Lawrence St., in the parking lots.

"We've been meaning to expand the market for a while," said Heather McMann of Groundwork Lawrence. "Our first priority was the weekend and reaching people who were coming home on the train."

McMann said they decided to host the three markets after talking with residents over the years and sponsoring focus groups with members of Lawrence CommunityWorks. Some of the residents polled said they could not make it during work hours in the middle of the week.

"We decided to respond to their need," McMann said.

"There isn't a lot of fresh produce available in Lawrence and the city has a high number of diabetes and cholesterol. This is a way to help the residents improve their health," she said.

Shoppers at any of the three markets can find fruits and vegetables, farm fresh eggs, homemade breads, local honey, and baked goods from Boston Hill Farm of North Andover, Brox Farm in Dracut, Riverdale Farm in Groton, Nagog Farm in Littleton and Johnson Highland View Farm in Windham.

Cheryl Farnum of Boston Hill Farm has been selling at the Lawrence farmers market for at least eight years.

"It's a way to advertise your farm and support the local area," she said.

She said corn and tomatoes are always popular and in Lawrence peppers and eggplants also sell well because of the large Hispanic population.

Farnum said available produce includes peppers, cucumbers, cherries, blueberries, tomatoes and corn.

"The hot weather has made crops come quickly," Farnum said. "Last year was a washout, but this weather has been better."

Artists and craftspeople also will sell their works at the markets, and local organizations will distribute information about resources and upcoming events. Nutrition education specialist Jeanne Baranek of the University of Massachusetts Extension will offer nutrition tips and flavorful recipes.

IF YOU GO TO MARKET

McGovern Transportation Center, 211 Merrimack St., open Tuesdays, from 4 to 7:30 p.m. until Oct. 26.

Appleton Way, between Essex and Common streets and next to City Hall, open Wednesdays, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., through Oct. 27.

Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, 216 Lawrence St., open Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. until Oct. 30.



ANGIE BEAULIEU/Staff photo Debbie Auger and Miguel Pelletier arrange their table at the Lawrence farmers market. Groundwork Lawrence is offering another location for the farmers market on Tuesday nights at the McGovern Transportation Center from 4 to 7:30.