



Value-added Kitchen Completed

Our Mission . . .
 “to provide quality, locally grown produce to the community and provide an alternative income for our farmers.”

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Thanks to the generous support of the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, the Columbus County Community Farmers Market has a new value-added kitchen in which farmers and other local food entrepreneurs can prepare value-added products for sale to the public.



Construction on the 900 sq. ft. addition started in the spring and was completed in November 2009.

The 900 sq. ft. addition to the existing farmers market structure is home to a commercial honey extractor which was purchased in 2007 with grant funds from the Duke Endowment Program for the Rural Carolinas (PRC) Discover Columbus Project. In addition, a 12' x 12' walk-in cooler can accommodate short-term storage of fresh fruits and vegetables.

In addition, the kitchen

is equipped with a commercial range, convection oven, refrigerator, freezer, dishwasher, two stainless steel food prep tables, and various utensils. A small office provides a work area for the market manager as well as storage of the Farmers Market files and other important materials.

The North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission has been a long-time supporter of the Columbus County Community Farmers Market. In fact, the existing farmer's market structure was built in 2005 with grant funds from the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission totaling \$125,000.

As the Farmers Market has continued to grow over the past several years, the Board of Directors identified some long-range goals for the expanded use of the facility.



The new value-added kitchen includes several pieces of stainless steel equipment as well as an office for the market manager.

The NCTTFC \$152,000 grant helped the market expand to better serve the community.



A commercial honey extractor, purchased in 2007 with funds from the Duke Endowment Program for the Rural Carolinas, is now housed in the new kitchen.

“We are so appreciative of the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission’s support of our farmer’s market,” said Irvin W. Brown, President of the Columbus County Farmers Market. “This new addition to our market will help us do even more to meet the needs of our patrons and vendors.”

For more information, visit their website at www.tobaccotrustfund.org



**Columbus County
Community
Farmers Market**

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Sowing Seeds of Understanding

The Farmers Market was all abuzz as more than 1,200 primary and elementary school students from Whiteville City Schools visited the Market for their annual field trip over a two-week period last spring.

Farmers Market vendors, Cooperative Extension staff, and members of the Columbus County Beekeepers led learning sessions that taught students about four important topics:



Howard Wallace of Columbus County Cooperative Extension uses a student volunteer to help illustrate "How it Grows."

- **How it Grows** - students learned how a seed is planted in soil, germinates, is pollinated, and produces a fruit or vegetable;
- **How it Pollinates** - students saw a live demonstration hive of honey bees and tasted a sample of locally produced honey;
- **How it Sells** - students learned about the Farmers Market as well as value-added products; and
- **How it Tastes** (the most popular session) - blind-folded teachers played the game, "Name That Vegetable," where they attempted to name a fruit or vegetable by taste and smell only. Students were given samples of locally grown produce including blueberries, strawberries, canta-

loupe, bell pepper, cucumber, squash, radish, and zucchini.



Blind-folded Whiteville City Schools teachers attempt to guess the fresh fruit or vegetable by taste or smell.

The Farmers Market field trip was funded by two United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants - the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) grant received by Whiteville City Schools and the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant received by the Columbus County Farmers Market. Students also visited the Columbus County Cooperative Extension Service, next door to the Farmers Market, where extension staff taught them the importance of good nutrition and safe food handling practices.



Whiteville City Schools students sample fresh fruits and vegetables as part of their annual field trip to the farmers market.

Most children in Columbus County (and throughout the United States) do not eat enough servings of fruits and vegetables consistent with national recommendations of

5 to 9 servings per day. Increasing access to fruits and vegetables in schools has been shown to increase consumption by students.

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) through the United States Department of Agriculture is helping to provide the financial resources for some elementary schools to provide additional fresh (or dried) fruits and vegetables to students outside of the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs.



In addition to fresh fruits and vegetables, the students were educated on honeybee pollinators and local honey production.

Kathryn Faulk, Child Nutrition Director with Whiteville City Schools, is the local coordinator of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Lead partners at the state level include the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Child Nutrition Services (which administers the USDA FFVP) and the Nutrition Education and Training Program and the Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Program in the Division of Public Health (DPH). These partners provide both staff and financial resources to the program and nutrition education resource materials and trainings.



New EBT Program Well Received



Columbus County Community Farmers Market became one of 12 farmers markets in North Carolina to accept state issued Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, the electronic delivery method for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) also known locally as the Food Stamp Program and in North Carolina as Food and Nutrition Services.

SNAP is a federally funded program which delivers monthly benefits to 28 million Americans nationwide. Approximately 57,000 people received benefits last year within the four counties served by the Farmers Market - Columbus, Bladen, Brunswick and Robeson.

The Farmers Market partnered with the Columbus County Department of Social Services, administrator of the Food and Nutrition Services program locally, to promote the program to current recipients.

The EBT initiative is coordinated statewide by Leaflight, Inc. through a program called the 21st Century Farmers Markets Program. Leaflight provides

participating markets with free wireless card processing terminals and supplies, education, training, promotional materials, bookkeeping and accounting services.

Subscribers swipe their card at the Farmers Market information booth for their desired dollar amount and in exchange, receive that amount in EBT tokens. These tokens are issued in \$1 increments for use with participating vendors throughout the farmers market. Visa and MasterCard credit and debit card transactions receive tokens in \$5 increments.

The Farmers Market's participation in the SNAP/EBT/FNS Program allows FNS recipients to increase

their access to locally grown and locally produced food items. Eligible items include fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, baked goods, jams and jellies and honey. The purchase of vegetable plants and potted herbs is also acceptable.

For information on applying for food stamp benefits, please call (910) 642-2800.



Grant Funds Promote Market Growth & Promotion

The Columbus County Community Farmers Market experienced one of its biggest and best years ever in 2009 as a result of increased marketing and promotion from two grants.

Market Manager Carol Shuman said, "2009 was an excellent year for our Farmers Market. As a result of increased promotion of the market, we had a record number of both daily and annual vendors as well as some of the largest numbers of patrons we have ever seen."

The 2009 season opened in early May with a record-setting Opening Day. More than 600 people attended. There were 21 annual vendors, 17 daily vendors, and

more than 30 vendors participated in the annual "Christmas from the Heart" Craft Show & Sale in early December.

Shuman estimated patron participation in the market increased by more than one-third in 2009 as a result of marketing and promotion efforts funded by the Golden LEAF Foundation and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers Market Promotion Program.



The Golden LEAF Foundation funded a project entitled, "Joint Initiative to Expand Agriculture Markets" which involved three cooperating organizations in

southeastern North Carolina - Columbus County Community Farmers Market, Columbus County Beekeepers Association, and Lumber River Regional Growers Association.

The \$70,000 grant provided funding to help increase local farm participation and increase sales; expand marketing opportunities; improve collaboration among relevant organizations; and increase public awareness of the market.



In addition, the Market received an \$18,000 USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant

which was used for a variety of local marketing and promotional activities including to organize a community partner program; for market research designed to increase the number of farmers/vendors and their income; and to increase market participation - particularly among low-income and diverse community residents; to increase the use of the USDA Women, Infants & Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons.

For more information about Golden LEAF, visit www.goldenleaf.com. For more information about the USDA FMPP, visit www.ams.usda.gov.



Columbus County Community Farmers Market

132 Government Complex Road
P.O. Box 888
Whiteville, NC 28472-0888

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday
7:00 AM until 12:00 Noon
May through December

www.columbuscountyfarmersmarket.com

“Fresh from the Farm to Your Family!”

Volunteers Make a Difference

The Columbus County Community Farmers Market is more than just a place for farmers to sell and patrons to buy fresh local farm products.

The Farmers Market provides a valuable service to the community through special events, educational activities, free recipes and nutritional information.

Trying to tend their vendor booth, answer questions, and carry out special events can be a challenge for vendors and Board members. So, in 2009, the Market partnered with the Columbus County Volunteer Center and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) at Southeastern Community College to secure volunteers to assist with various market

activities.

Another new and popular addition to the Saturday market in 2009 was a community information booth at which patrons could obtain information about the market such as hours of operation, special events schedule, etc., as well as purchase t-shirts, note cards, and reusable shopping bags.



Elizabeth Chase with the Columbus County Volunteer Center & RSVP Program helped staff the new community information booth at the Market.

Volunteers also assisted with a monthly special event by serving samples, helping with distribution of school supplies, and answering questions.

Market Manager Carol Shuman expressed her appreciation to the volunteers: “We are so appreciative of everyone who volunteered to help us at the Farmers Market. Together, our volunteers contributed more than 200 hours of service during 2009.”

RSVP volunteers included John & Judith Ball, Ramona Barnes, Mitchel & Sue Bell, Elizabeth Chase, J. P. & Daphne Coleman, Lucy Frink, Mr. & Mrs. Earl Guyton, Joe Kissam, Elizabeth Moto, Jo Paul, Andrew Shaw, Jr., Margaret Earnestine Shaw, Arlene



RSVP volunteer Elizabeth Moto assisted with a number of special events including the “Back-to-School” Fun Day!

Waterman, Claudette Williams, and John C. Worthington.

For more information about the Volunteer Center or RSVP or to volunteer, please contact the Volunteer Center at SCC by calling (910) 642-7141 ext. 294.