

FARMERS MARKET GROWS

THIS FALL, A FARMERS MARKET SPROUTED ON CAMPUS, THANKS TO STUDENTS.

Article by Natalie Hampton

The new Campus Farmers Market has become the freshest attraction for lunchtime visitors to the Brickyard. On Wednesdays, five regular vendors sell seafood and meat, fruits and vegetables, milk and eggs, and soaps and lotions.

Students are running the market to help build a local food economy within the university. The market is the brainchild of Eric Ballard, a student in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. As associate director of student government's Sustainability Commission, Ballard recruited vendors for a one-time market last spring during Earth Day activities.

The purpose of that first market, in addition to providing a campus source for local food, was education – letting the campus community know the benefits of buying local foods. Agroecology students of Dr. Michelle Schroeder-Moreno, an assistant professor of crop science, developed educational materials that were given out at the event.

In preparation for a weekly version of the market this fall, Ballard completed a handbook, vendor agreements and a schedule during his summer internship with the Center for Environmental Farming Systems.

This fall, Ballard was back on the Brickyard, this time as a salesperson for one of the vendors, Mae Farms of Franklin County. Each week, he sells local milk, eggs and pasture-raised pork products.

Ballard says he's been pleased with results this semester. "The first thing I noticed is that sales are consistent and steadily

increasing," he said. Special events attract more customers, he said. Before Halloween, market visitors were invited to paint a pumpkin. On Wednesday, the last day of the fall market season, caramel apples will be the featured attraction.

This year, Ariel Fugate, a sophomore majoring in fisheries and wildlife, is managing the market for student government. Each week, she sends market updates to a list of faithful market shoppers. Recently, the market's student board developed a

market Web site to provide information on products, farms and vendors, as well as recipes. Students visited the farms to take photos and develop profiles of each one. For vendors, the market Web site includes links to an application and handbook.

"I think it's gone really well," Fugate said. "There's been a good mix of faculty and students buying, without a lot of advertising."

After its fall finale Nov. 18, the market will

reopen Feb. 17, about a month earlier than many local farmers markets. Fugate says the plan is to keep the market open from mid-February through mid-May, when most students leave for the summer, and to reopen when fall classes begin.

This spring, organizers will put up posters in campus buildings to promote the weekly markets. Fugate would like to see more people from across campus coming to shop at the market, as well as residents living near campus. "I want everyone to get involved in building a local foods community on campus," she said.



The Campus Farmers Market, featuring an assortment of produce and local products, will wrap up its fall season on Wednesday with a caramel apple promotion.