



Market Central is a 501(c)3 non-profit that supports farmers market because local markets sustain farmers and the environment, promote healthy food, and contribute to community- building through economic and social activities.

that supports farmers market because local markets sustain farmers and the environment, promote healthy food, and contribute to community- building through economic and social activities.

Market Central engages the Charlottesville City Market community of vendors, consumers and administrators through programs and outreach, to enrich the local market experience.

Market Central Programs

The SNAP and Debit Token System

To increase low-income consumer access to the farmers market, Market Central collaborated with the Jefferson Area Board of Aging in 2009 to implement a system to accept USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funds (SNAP—the new food stamps). Wireless technology allows customers to use their government-issued EBT (electronic benefit transfer) cards at the market, while also facilitating use of debit cards. Every week at both City Markets, customers can conduct bank and EBT card transactions in exchange for the equivalent amount in wooden tokens. The customer shops with the tokens, and vendors are reimbursed the following week. The program provides flexible means for customers to buy local food, and increases farm sales. To help SNAP families afford local food, and thanks to support from local and national foundations, such as the Wholesome Wave and the Sarah Lahr Educational Fund, Market Central has been able to match the first \$10 of SNAP with \$10 in incentive coupons for the duration of the program.

Year	Debit Sales	SNAP Sales	Incentive Coupons	Total Sales
2014	\$67,479.00	\$6,133.00	\$3,941.00	\$71,420
2015	\$70,409.00	\$4,835.00	\$3,617.00	\$78,861

Year	# SNAP transactions	New SNAP customer
2014	447	60
2015	407	72



In 2015 SNAP customers used \$1,298 less in USDA funding but only \$324 less in incentive coupons compared to 2014. Congress decreased the 2015 Food Stamp budget, leading to a decrease in benefits. However, there is room for improvement in alerting SNAP families about the advantages of shopping at City Market. Data shows less than 5%

of area SNAP families shop here.

SNAP at Michie Market

In 2015 Market Central was a sub-grantee to the International Rescue Committee’s New Roots farmers market, called the Michie Market for its location along Michie Drive, a neighborhood with a high refugee population. The Michie Market is funded by the USDA Food Insecurity Incentive Program. New Roots trains refugee farmers to use and develop their skills growing cultural heritage food (such as pumpkin shoots, Asian long beans, various peppers, buckwheat, Roselle, water spinach and various greens) and uses the market to teach hands-on business skills. In turn, the market gives access to refugee families to their culturally appropriate food. Many of the families are SNAP eligible, so Market Central provided the SNAP license and management for the SNAP service. It is a Market Central’s policy to support diversity at the market and the community’s access to healthy food.

IRC New Roots will continue into 2016, with a few changes to strengthen the program.

Meet Yer Eats Farm Tour

Labor Day 2015 saw the 8th annual installment of the Meet Yer Eats Farm tour, patterned after the Carolina Farm Stewards farm tour in North Carolina. This past year, two years of USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

funding ended, so with a slimmer budget the board took on the duties of program director, as we had done for several farm tours before the grant. A slow start and other factors led to a decrease in attendance, but very good feedback from the dedicated attendees. We maintained the 2014 farm participation rate of 12, with the bonus of some new farms involved. We have had as many as 15-20 farms participate in the past. In attempting to reach a wider audience, we diversified our outreach. We placed ads in Charlottesville Family Magazine, 2 weeks in C-ville, posted on the state tourism website, used WINA's non-profit plug-away Monday services, and contacted other farmers markets to advertise. Channel 19 interviewed a participating farm the morning of the tour. We were too late to take advantage of corporate and business sponsors, a benefit we have used in the past. We also seemed to lose ground on getting volunteers to stand shifts at the participating farms to oversee data collection and sell passes on the day of the tour. Despite some contraction in the farm tour, the Board is still committed to the purpose. Farm tours are educational and provide transparency to the consumer, resulting in trust and loyalty. They deepen the relationship between the customer and vendor, distinguishing the market from the grocery store. The occurrence of farm tours is on the rise state-wide, so we would like to hold our place among them. 2016 will see the Board focusing on early commitments so that marketing, and seeking sponsorships and volunteers can start early.

Classes and Demos

Market Central finished up the Canning Project portion of the FMPP grant. In the fall of 2014, our board member Becky Calvert taught 16 weeks of classes, with field trips and professional presentations, free and open to the public. The classes culminated in developing a product, Apple Pie Jam, and selling it at the market for several weeks. In the winter of 2015, the classes shifted to development. Classes were offered in Navigating Virginia Food Laws, Packaging, Small Business Bookkeeping, Building Your Own Website, and Internet Marketing and Social Media. All classes were taught by local or regional professionals. The classes were well-attended by vendors, and hopefully will contribute to their success.



in early 2015. canning the public. it at the business skills Branding and

Contrary to Market Central's tradition of conducting a minimum of 4 demos at the market every year, Market Central did not conduct demos in 2015. We plan to resume that activity in 2016.

The Board

The Directors of the Market Central Board serve because they believe the farmers market is a vibrant, exciting way to access healthy food, support local farmers, and build community.

Our members have diverse backgrounds. We have 2 vendor members, and 8 community members. Two members are currently on a leave of absence. We have openings for members who would like to share and contribute to our mission. Kelly Bowman is our super-efficient and dedicated SNAP/Debit program coordinator. Her job is partially funded by a small debit card swipe fee, and a 6% fee charged to the vendors on token system sales (the same percentage the city charges on cash sales).

Grants and Contributions

The FMPP grant officially ended in April, 2015 bringing a total of \$76,020 invested in the market over 2.5 years. In 2015 and through 2016 Market Central will be sub-grantees of the IRC New Roots to provide SNAP and debit card service to the Michie Market.

We received \$753.50 in the form of Dahlias to sell at the market from Harold Timmeny, a former vendor. This unusual donation brought pleasure to everyone! Reusable market bags with the MC logo at \$10/ea. brought in \$310. We received \$8,500 in private donations, including a major gift from the Sarah Lahr Educational Fund, to fund the SNAP Incentive Coupon program. We will be able to cover the 2016 incentives with the remaining funds. We count on grants and donations to continue our service. We are seeking enough funding to hire an executive director, at least part-time (about \$15,000). Income from the programs goes back into funding the programs.

For more information please contact us at: <http://marketcentralonline.org> info@markecentralonline.org

