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The Wayne State University Farmers Market means many things to many people

Posted by: [The Michigan Citizen](#) Posted date: **June 06, 2013** In: [Fresh Ideas](#) | comment : 0



Charice Thomas of Sweet Potato Sensations
KAMI POTHUKUCHI PHOTO

By Kami Pothukuchi, Ph.D.
[Special to the Michigan Citizen](#)

It is hard to imagine summer in midtown without the Wayne State University Farmers Market.

And you don't have to: The market opened its sixth consecutive season June 5 at 11 a.m., at its usual location, 5201 Cass Ave., across the street from the Main Branch of the Detroit Public Library.

Here are some vital statistics from the market's 2012 season: Over 21 weeks, it hosted a total of 16 growers and businesses, including 11 Detroit-based ones. Four of the eight produce

vendors were Detroit farms. Five vendors were people of color, or in the case of D-Town Farm, the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. Four businesses were woman-led. Three were brand new operations selling at our market for the first time.

We did nearly \$250,000 in sales, including about \$20,000 in sales to customers using the Michigan Bridge Card. As readers may know, we match Bridge Card spending at the market with Double Up Food Bucks (up to \$20 per card per day). Double Up Food Bucks, which may be used only on Michigan-grown fresh fruits and vegetables, is made possible through a partnership with the Fair Food Network.

Five chef demos, three performances by Mosaic Youth Theater, a spoken-word performance by youth from the Inside Out Literary Arts Project and a flash music performance by Coyote Monk embellished the market.

Important though these statistics are, there is more to the story of what the WSU Farmers Market is and what it offers different groups.

For example, customers from campus and elsewhere in midtown value most the market's convenient location, along with the affordability, freshness and locally derived nature of its inventory.

Students who volunteer at the market dedicate time because the market's values reflect their own, because it offers a fun venue for socializing and networking, and because they see the difference it makes

Top Stories of the Week

Grassroots group endorses Mike Duggan for Mayor



The grassroots organization, Community Coalition, announced its endorsement for Mike Duggan

for mayor of Detroit, June 7, at New Bethel Baptist Church, which over the years has played an important role in the Civil Rights movement and Black political activism. ... ∞

Misinformed: EM Town Halls not being held June 6, 10



There will not be a community meeting tonight with Emergency Manager Kewyn Orr. Two

community meetings — which were to be held at Greater Grace Temple and Martin Luther King High School, for June 6 and June 10 — will ... ∞

EM Roberts says he's leaving, but not going far



"I'm leaving, but I won't be far....I'm leaving, but I won't be gone....I'm leaving, but I'll still be

here." DPS Emergency manager Roy Roberts announced his retirement to board members at his 14th floor offices at the Fischer Building May 2. ... ∞

Urban renewal displaces residents



Recent evictions in the downtown and midtown area send the message to some that the new

Detroit does not include many of the old Detroit residents. "This is going to end up like Harlem," says lifelong Detroit resident Betty Scrusse. "They're going ... ∞

in the community. They may also earn course credit on projects related to the market or even land a job with the market.

For community partners, the WSU Farmers Market offers a path to achieve their organizational objectives.

Whether it is training youth in agricultural entrepreneurship by having them spend a couple of days at the market, as is the case with Earthworks Urban Farm and their Youth Farm Stand Project; Chef Phil Jones spreading the word during food demos about how his restaurant, COLORS-Detroit, fosters justice for food workers; or Eastern Market advancing its goal of increasing access to fresh, local produce by serving as the fiduciary for the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called food stamps, at the market, the market's many collaborations serve to illustrate the elaborate, colorful and many-layered quilt that is Detroit's food system.

For local food advocates, the WSU Farmers Market is a crucial strategy to build local food self-reliance, reduce dependence on the corporate-controlled conventional food system, preserve the unique agricultural heritage of the region and adapt to global climate change.

Farmers markets are yet quite small in their impact on the overall food economy, but they represent an important tool to create a more democratic, just and resilient food system.

For local growers and businesses, the market offers a low-cost, low-risk opportunity to generate sales of fresh or prepared products, cultivate new customers and support community members they may hire.

Farmers markets are well-known for their capacity to create multiplier effects and keep money circulating within the local economy. For new businesses, farmers markets are an especially attractive way to get started and build a niche for themselves.

For centuries, markets have been the great gathering places of societies. This is no less true for neighborhood markets. On any given day at the WSU Farmers Market, you might see an international student learning about an unfamiliar vegetable from a senior citizen, co-workers spontaneously converging to have a discussion in the middle of the market, couples on leisurely lunch dates, a line of youngsters from a nearby pre-school on a field trip, new parents showing off their baby to friends, or on slow days, vendors trading notes and tips. Where would this convergence of diversity happen were it not for the market?

For me, however, one value illustrated by the WSU Farmers Market stands head and shoulders above others. For this faculty member of a public university located in an inner city, the WSU Farmers Market is a strong symbol of the institution's civic purpose.

The farmers market is not only an educational resource — such as a classroom, lab or library — that helps students cultivate their skills and capacities to envision a better future, it also models aspects of relationships among people and between people and the earth that may be central to achieving a more sustainable future.

In increasing access to healthy food, creating economic opportunity, bringing together diverse individuals and advancing alternative food systems, the market helps the university perform its urban mission. Let's meet at the WSU Farmers Market!

Kami Pothukuchi is associate professor of urban planning and manager of the Wayne State University Farmers Market. She is also a member of the Detroit Food Policy Council.

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Ready 2 Grow: Creating a healthy food system through media, movement and fun

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about 2 days ago i said, The official EM Townhall Meeting is June 10, 6:30 p.m. at WSU-Law School, Spencer M. Partrich Auditorium

about 2 days ago i said, Grassroots group, The Community Coalition endorses Mike Duggan for Mayor of Detroit.
<http://t.co/OJYoHVLhow>

about 4 days ago i said, Wayne State's Wednesday Farmers Market begins today through Oct. 30, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
<http://t.co/6ma9blcVj9>

about 4 days ago i said, Wayne State University Bd. of Govs elected M. Roy Wilson as the institution's 12th president effective Aug. 1 <http://t.co/NRMf03NmzJ>

about 5 days ago i said, Gov. Orr's doing a fine job.

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