

FREE

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Farmer's Market

Thorsons provide quality and freshness in Central Minnesota

by Karin L. Nauber
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Farmer's markets may be one of the oldest forms of trade known to man. Farmers have long sold their produce to customers often from their very homes.

The literal meaning of a farmer's market may well be that it is made up of farmers selling their wares to customers. A typical farmer's market in modern times typically consists of a booth or table or other place from which to sell their produce that might include fruits, vegetables, meat, canned foods (home canning) and sometimes even crafts or other homemade items.

They typically take place during the harvest season for locally grown foods. In Central Minnesota that usually means anywhere from sometime in June to September.

Farmer's markets come in a variety of sizes from many vendors to a single seller. They exist worldwide and usually reflect their local culture and economy.

There are several benefits to a local farmer's market. Some of the benefits are to the farmers and include less transportation miles, less handling, less refrigeration and less storage. By selling the "fruits" of their labor at a farmer's market, they are also able to cut overhead costs and in some cases eliminate those costs altogether



Customers can find fresher, healthier foods close to home by shopping at a farmer's market.

the communities in which they are located.

Some of those benefits include: generating traffic to nearby businesses and providing an outlet for local products. There may be other benefits too, like drawing attention to the nearby area and bringing in more people who are looking for good, home-grown, organic foods.

Of course, there are also benefits to the consumers who often favor farmer's markets for many reasons including: reduced drive time, fresher foods, seasonal foods and healthier foods.

According to Farmer's Markets of America, customers drawn to farmer's markets shop locally for three main reasons: food qual-

ity, better prices and a great social atmosphere.

Based on information shown in Farmer's Markets of America, the prices at a farmer's market are lower than prices at a supermarket 91% of the time.

Thorson's have a "super" market

You might say that Mike and Eloise Thorson of rural Browerville have a "super" market—a super farmer's market, that is.

They have been providing locally grown vegetables and fruits to farmer's markets in Central Minnesota since 1988.

"We take a 'no frills' approach to raising the highest quality products and delivering them to market freshly picked," said the Thorsons.

Part of that "no frills" approach is that they use growing methods that are environmentally friendly and sensitive to their customers' health and safety.

"We are similar to organic—we only use sprays when we have to. We use environmentally friendly organic sprays as much as possible," said Eloise.

Cont. on page 2

URBANIZATION IN A SMALL TOWN



Sabrina Stueve made full use of the community garden as she picked raspberries, peppers, and plucked a few weeds here and there.

by Laramie Jackson and Sabrina Stueve

"I need to live in an area that has energy . . . culture. It doesn't have to be big, it doesn't have to be huge, but it has to be . . . it has to be existing. I think all the time about ways that Clarissa is dying. All little towns are dying. I'm a spontaneous little dreamer," said Pam Cook as she brought to the table a world of creative, conversation-sparking ideas.

Her sole purpose is simple: to enhance and urbanize the community of Clarissa. With her award-winning smile and contagiously positive personality, Cook shared with us her ideas to light the fire in the hearts of citizens throughout the community.

"I've lived here since I was eight years old in the city of Clarissa, and now I'm 66. I hate the transition that is happening, and I know that it is also very real; that little towns are dying," said Cook.

As she welcomed us into her home, knick knacks and memorabilia lining the walls, she recalled a fond memory of hers as she sat us down in her blue toned kitchen that looked as if it was pulled straight from a page of *Home and Garden* magazine.

Back in 1987, when her husband, Larry, was the mayor of Clarissa for the first time, President Ronald Reagan put together a project with his administration team called the Take Pride in America Campaign. The purpose of this initiative was to mobilize

the American people; to get them moving by helping each other and taking part in their community building projects. Amazingly, Clarissa was one of three towns in the nation that received an award on behalf of this campaign for their outstanding achievement.

"The town was just on fire with cleaning up, with getting it to look nice; and, low and behold, we, in the city of Clarissa, were one of three cities in the whole United States to achieve this award. So, President Reagan invited my husband and I to the White House. They shut down the White House, we had lunch in the back lawn and the marine band played. . . ." said Cook, as she drifted

into a world of fondness and recollection.

Though rewarding it may be, Cook shared with us this story not to flaunt the memories of

having dinner at the most powerful man in the world's house, but to highlight what coming together as a community can do.

"Because people *did* work together, that achievement was awarded. I just want to bring back some creativity. History has proven that a community working together can make things happen," Cook explained.

Over time, Cook has creatively assessed multiple possibilities to enhance our rural community, ultimately sifting them down to four, easily achievable, interest groups: history, beautification, horticulture and gardening, and events and activities.

Her aspirations for the future success of our community are endless and inspiring, as she promotes creativity, conversation, and imagination.

"I just want to start it all," she giggled, "I don't want to be in charge of anything. I want to give people that are interested the ability to move forward. There's nothing worse than someone coming forward with an idea and then someone sweltering it. That's not my vision. It's not, 'my vision is your vision,'" she noted.

The first idea Cook touched base on was her vision for a new, or, renovated park.

"What I want to make is a park—or, add to the park—and I want an "Our town's steps of time" theme to

Cont. on page 5

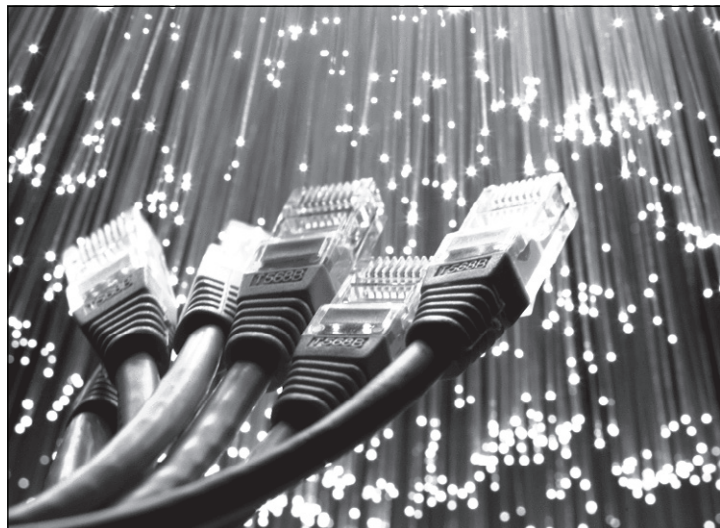


Farmer's markets typically host a wide selection of fresh veggies—anything from cucumbers and tomatoes to kohlrabi and melons.

(such as a permanent building or structure, although some farmer's markets do have them: ie, Thorson's Farm Market which will be further talked about later in this article).

In addition to benefits to the farmer, there are also benefits to

Broadband in rural areas ★Farmer's Market



by Trinity Gruenberg
trinity@inhnews.com

The internet has come a long way since dial up and fighting over the use of the phone line. Nowadays having internet access is a necessity. It is pretty easy to find an internet service provider and get connected. If you have access in your area.

Data released from Connect Minnesota shows that roughly 75 percent of Minnesotans have access to broadband internet, but only 57 percent in rural areas have access.

Connect Minnesota has been working since 2008 to ensure all Minnesotans have access to broadband internet, including our rural areas. In 2010, Connect Minnesota was awarded \$4,470,035 in federal grants for Minnesota's Broad-

band Initiative.

In Minnesota there are approximately 191 broadband providers. About 174,000 people depend on fixed wireless or a mobile broadband connection with a low data cap. About 715,000 people only have one wired provider for broadband.

The average speed goal for Minnesota is 10 mbps (megabits per second). More providers are going above and beyond that. Wadena is one of the fastest cities in our state with an average speed of 30.9 mbps.

The most commonly used type of broadband in rural areas is Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) because it connects through the telephone line. Cable internet uses the television cable and a modem to convert the signal to digital and is faster

than DSL. FiOS (fiber optic) is the fastest wired connection out there. The signal travels through an optical network and copper wiring. The draw back of FiOS is that it isn't typically available in rural areas.

Wadena and Verndale's most used providers are West Central Telephone Association for DSL and FiOS and Arvig and CenturyLink DSL are just one percent behind. From Hewitt to Long Prairie, CenturyLink DSL is the most used, closely followed by Charter Communications Cable and Arvig DSL.

Mobile broadband works great if you have a signal, much like a cell phone. It can be a USB device or activating the mobile hotspot on your cell phone. If you have little to no signal with your cell phone in your rural area then you may want to consider something else.

Another option is satellite internet. The internet uses the satellite signal and transfers it through a satellite modem for your internet. The drawback with this internet is like your regular satellite signal it can cut out during a thunderstorm. The plus side is that you can get this in rural areas where wired broadband and cable have not yet reached.

The options are out there to get broadband to your rural area. Which option will you choose?



Thorson's Market in Long Prairie is open from late June or early July through part of September.

They got started in the farmer's market trade after several years of traditional farming which included producing corn, soybeans and hogs.

"We started with free range chickens—and processed around 20,000 a year here at the farm for about 18 years," added Eloise.

They no longer raise animals, but at one time, in addition to the chickens, also raised baby calves, dairy steers and hogs.

The first years they sold all of what they raised at the farm and a few drop off sites.

"Then we needed more places to market as we increased our numbers," said Eloise.

One of those places was the Minneapolis Farmer's Market where they sold for about 15 years.

Now, they raise about 40 acres for the markets and some corn and soybeans.

time in September.

"We sometimes have a stand in Browerville, but not this year with all the construction. We go to farmer's markets in Brainerd, Baxter, Nisswa, St. Cloud and our son runs a market in Park Rapids two days a week," said Eloise.

Some of their produce includes: beans, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cucumbers, green beans, jams, kohlrabi, lettuce and other greens, melons, onions, peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, rhubarb, squash of many varieties, strawberries, sweet corn, tomatoes, turnips, wild rice, zucchini and a variety of others.

While farming is Mike's main occupation, he is also very involved on various boards of rural electric cooperatives. Eloise is a customized training representative and does training for business and industry clients through Central Lakes College—Staples.

continued from front

The number of people who work for the Thorson's on the day-to-day basis depends on the needs of the farm and what needs to be done that day.

"All of our employees are part-time and are family, friends and neighbors," explained Eloise.

Thorson's Farm Market in Long Prairie is usually open from late June or early July through some

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On behalf of the Todd County Farmers Union, we would like to thank our contributors for their wonderful donations to make the event a success. Special thanks to Doug Peterson, Farmers Union State President; Representative Collin Peterson, 7th District; and all the legislators and sheriff candidates. Thanks Dan Remer for the music and the city of Clarissa for the use of the park. Thanks to everyone who helped or came to the event, you all made it a wonderful event and we'll see you next year. Please support the businesses listed below. We apologize to anyone we may have omitted. Todd County Farmers Union officers: Alan Perish, President; Lynn Erickson, Vice-President; Judy Buhl, Secretary; and Lonnie Iverson, Treasurer.

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 Wadena Hide & Fur

★ Urbanization...

continued from front

show when Clarissa was created, and the businesses—like a walk through time. I have this design for a peaceful place where you can go have lunch and just sit under a tree, you know what I mean?" she asked with a smile. "We need individuals who have an interest in the past, present, and future. We need people whose talents and skills are dormant. We all have these special skills," she said.

This past year, Cook and her husband donated five alluring hanging flower baskets to display on Main Street in order to help restore color and beauty to the community. She has plans to construct a team of individuals who are interested in gardening, to volunteer their services and talents to tend to flower beds, gardens and ultimately work to maintain the city's appearance.

This initiative falls in line with her third interest area: horticulture and gardening. This year, plans of Cook's already fell into place as her dream of starting a community garden became an easily achievable reality.

"I did get a community garden going this year. I asked Spencer Hayes to be in charge of it, because he is a great gardener. I asked the council if they could loan out the property where the snow is stored in the winter. I said, 'In the summer couldn't we just use that for a garden?' . . . they thought it was a great idea! We can take it [the produce] and make a farmer's market or share it with people who need food. I was talking to Spencer and we will probably have to make it bigger next year," said Cook. "And if nothing happens we'll have a big garbage can feed in the fall."

The community garden, which

currently takes root at "Industrial Park", has an abundance of produce that was grown in soil that was tested and approved by Pro-Ag. In the wake of this project, Cook lead us to her final region of interest.

"I think that we can do so much with events. I know that we just had the Summerfest, but I think that throughout the year there are other opportunities to be involved," she explained.

As her mind went wild with ideas, she lit up as she shared with us her idea of purchasing an inflatable movie screen and hosting a big-screen movie night in the park every week. Local community clubs or extra-curricular activity groups would be encouraged to attend and sell popcorn, chips, or hot-dogs as a fundraiser for their team or group.

"We can make it fun and affordable for the family so it's something to do. Doesn't that sound fun?"

As she went on, she presented other ideas such as, what she coined, "Music in the Gazebo", an event that would highlight local talent such as poets, musicians, and school groups such as Eagle Valley's speech team, choir and band.

"Bring people together, socialize and express our talent," is how Cook visualized her goals.

In the back of our minds, we all have that one goal—that goal that we yearn so desperately to achieve. For Pam Cook, that goal is seeing the community she loves grow and blossom into the thriving city it has the potential to be. Ideas take time to grow into the reality we dream of them becoming, followed by action, which, takes time; but with a community of believers, anything is possible.

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