

MARKET: Passion, creativity drive effort for local food access

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to elevate the manager's role and professionalize it. It's hard running something like that on a volunteer basis," Tehan said.

Last year's managers, T. Lee Brown and Rachel Kelleher, played a major role keeping the market going and leaving it in a healthy position. With their hard work and efforts, Seed to Table is taking over a market with a strong foundation that's ready to grow.

Hiring part-time manager Caroline Hager was an exciting step. She and Tehan share a passion and vision for how sustainable, local farming can promote healthier nutritious food for Sisters Country. They also see big potential with Seed to Table oversight that will integrate education, support for local businesses and access to fresh food for those experiencing food insecurity.

Hager has been volunteering with Tehan on the Seed to Table farm and felt an instant connection to the mission the nonprofit is implementing for the community and Sisters' schools. With education and professional experience in business marketing, education and community engagement, Hager saw the market manager position as a perfect fit. She started in late April and has been working to make the market a safe and welcoming experience, especially during challenges associated with COVID-19. Her new role includes making sure there's a diverse array of high-quality vendors and getting the word out about the market.

Since she first stepped foot on the Seed to Table farm and met Audrey Tehan, Hager wanted to be involved.

"I got butterflies in my stomach and knew I wanted to be a part of it," she said. "I've volunteered in India and Africa, but there's something

very special about the energy at Seed to Table. There's a humbleness and it felt so approachable and comfortable to jump in. I got to witness the harmonious connection with Mahonia Gardens who farms next door. Since then I knew I wanted to be involved further and be a part of the Farmer's Market. When this position opened, I felt like I was ready and had the passion and experience to take on the job."

Hager is using her background in marketing, project management and event coordination as she steps into her new role.

"I love a challenge and the chance to apply my creative side," she said. "The timing with COVID-19 has made it a really important time to apply that passion and creativity to help make a safe and successful farmer's market."

Tehan appreciates Hager's efforts and her understanding of Seed to Table's mission of enhancing the health and wellness of the Sisters community while supporting the economic prosperity of local producers.

"We want to connect our producers directly with consumers, which is good for everyone involved. Health and wellness ties into our carbon footprint, environmental health and works well within the scope of COVID-19 regulations. Connecting producers with buyers in an open-air environment means less hands touching produce before it ends up in our

kitchens. There's no middle person," said Tehan

Another big change to help support vulnerable populations and to increase sales, will be the option for online preordering and curbside pickup. People can preorder by Thursday evening and come pick up with minimal contact with others.

"Seed to Table has COVID-19 emergency food relief fund applications available online so families can receive discounts on our produce... it'll be a sliding scale of discounts. Farmers Market is working on accepting SNAP," said Hager.

“ The timing with COVID-19 has made it a really important time to apply that passion and creativity to help make a safe and successful farmer's market. — Caroline Hager

Continuing an emphasis on childhood education, the Market will offer a weekly focus on health and wellness education.

"Each week we'll provide take-home education kits for students. They'll bring home kits for that week's theme, like cooking and math, or a worm composting kit. We're



PHOTO PROVIDED

Caroline Hager looks forward to a safe and successful farmer's market.

hoping the market will be a pick-up place for materials that supplement the online learning that children are doing," said Tehan.

The Market will be configured to reflect the current State criteria for what's essential and allowed at Farmer's markets. Booths will be spaced 10 feet apart. There will be a designated entrance and exit to the market. COVID-19 vendor policy requires that there's no sampling at the markets.

Tehan says taking on the Market feels like a natural progression for Seed to Table.

"Even though it's a challenging year to take it on for the first time, it's also the most important time to provide this service," she said.

To learn more about the Seed to Table preorder options, visit www.seedto-table.org.

Sisters Farmers Market will launch its season on Sunday, June 7 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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