



Tom Patterson Emerald
Eight-year-old Kelsey Howe scurries up a pole to hide from pelting rain at the seasonal debut of the Eugene Saturday Market.

Market

continued from page 1

winter and it's like a homecoming. It's really nice."

Wilén agreed, saying the Farmers' Market can be a personalized experience.

"We really like to remember people's names," Wilén said. "Being on the farm all week you get kind of isolated and then you get to come down here and be social. It's a lot of fun."

People regularly buy their produce at the Farmers' Market because it gives customers a chance to know exactly who the providers of their food are and talk to them, Wilén said.

"Sometimes produce can be expensive, but at the same time [people] need to be aware of what it takes to put food on the table," Wilén said. "It's good for them to come down and talk to people and

see what farmers have to say."

O'Hare agreed.

"Here the grower is the seller," he said. "Globalization has removed a lot of the mom-and-pop stores, and it's really hard to get a sense of community in the supermarkets. Here you can meet friends and have a good time."

In addition to providing a sense of community to its customers, the Farmers' Market tries to schedule regular events to promote itself, O'Hare said. The events include a Mother's Day celebration, Berry Days in July, and participating in the Eugene Celebration held in September.

They also participate in a Department of Agriculture program called WIC, or Women, Infants and Children. The WIC program is set up to help mothers with children under the age of 5 connect with farmers who are selling fresh produce that tend to be more nutritious than what you might find in

stores, O'Hare said. Each mother who qualifies for the program receives a coupon book with 10 \$2 coupons that they can use at any vendor.

"The idea is they get a little bit of money to buy nutrition for their families and they may become repeat customers and help the farmers," O'Hare said. "It's not a whole lot of money, but it's really just trying to give them a jump start into better nutrition."

But it is not just the programs and sense of community that brings people down to the Farmers' Market, it is the freshness of the products as well, Wilén said.

Tom Denison, owner of Denison Farms, agrees.

"There are some really talented growers here," Denison said. "We have customers that act like they have been waiting all winter, holding their breath, waiting for something fresh to come back."

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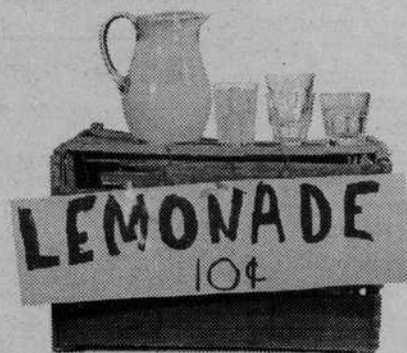
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