

Market from A1

decades, with venues ranging from parks to parking lots that achieved varying levels of success and organizational cohesiveness. The market's current iteration on Seventh Street started in 2016 and was also the beginning of an effort to create a solid network and structure.

"The market has been sort of informal over many years," said Mull. "There's always been a need to try to find local sources of healthy food in our community ... so there's always been an effort to try to network and get their communication united somehow."

Choosing Thursdays for markets was a small token of this as it coincided with the Bread Club gatherings in neighboring Kalapuya Books, which Mull felt added a touch of community fellowship.

To expand the network, though, a deeper change was needed.

The year 2016 also saw the market officially become a 501(c)(6) nonprofit, a tax status similar to 501(c)(3), but is reserved for "business leagues," such as chambers of commerce which derive much of their funding from member fees and dues.

One immediate advantage to the status change has been the market's access to government programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, the Double Up Food Bucks program and the Oregon Farm Direct Nutrition Program.

"We're also fully insured and licensed," Mull added, "so that anything that happens during the market covers and protects our vendors and ourselves from litigation ... so it's kind of like we have more of a business structure now."



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

**Shoppers browse the various offerings at the Farmers Market, which is open from 4 to 7 p.m. each Thursday through Oct. 31.**

Networking with other farmers markets and exposure through tourism publications has come with the organization's new status as well.

As such, membership fees with the market are \$50 per year, which gives members a seat and a vote at meetings whether or not they set up a booth. Vendor spots are \$10 per day for members or \$15 for non-members.

Though the past few years have seen a relatively moderate membership size, increased interest in the organization was generated this year when a \$2,700 donation was made by an anonymous source to provide eight weeks of free vendor space to new members of the group.

"Basically, your first eight markets are free if you're a member," Mull said.

Membership with the group holds deep importance for some.

Owner of Branch Road

Farm, Andhi Reyna, has been a vendor at the various versions of the market for about eight years and is a current member of the board.

"By having the farm-to-consumer aspect that we are able to do here, we can help bring some education to the community," she said. "It's helped farmers get the word out about their place and be able to have another avenue to sell, to educate, to keep us alive here as well."

Reyna's 73-acre farm, just four miles from downtown, produces veggies, lamb and goat meat and chicken eggs, but also offers field trips for various school districts, kids' cooking classes and summer camps.

"I think the educational side of what this farmers market can do is educate the consumer of why organic is important — why local produce is important," she said.

\$10 at the info booth and you'll get \$20 back to actually spend."

It's through such education that Reyna says she wants to "get rid of the myth that nutritious food is inaccessible."

Indeed, in a typical supermarket, organic food is noticeably pricier than mass-produced food. The United States Department of Agriculture estimated in its last economic study on the topic in 2010 that organically-produced food can cost anywhere from seven to 82 percent more, depending on the season and food type. Programs now accessible to the South Valley Farmers Market have potential to reduce the financial burden of shopping for organic food.

"I think the more we can interact in conversations about it, the more we can make some bigger steps," said Reyna, who pointed to some partnerships between vendors and small businesses in the community as steps in the right direction.

"The awareness for other businesses to know that farmers are here — we're also seeking to grow in our businesses and how to mutually support each other," she said.

On top of these benefits, Reyna believes the general community spirit of a farmers market can bring with it meaningful local connectivity.

"The community camaraderie and helping lift people up individually, things like this can help to do that," she

said. For these reasons, South Valley Farmers Market members are eager to explore options for their own expansion.

"I think there's huge room and opportunity and need for growth," said Reyna. "And I think for one thing that would be helping more vendors come to the market. When you have more vendors, you have more people interested, curious, coming through more often."

To realize this, the group has been planning on pushing the market down Seventh Street to E. Washington Ave. however the city recently denied a permit for such an expansion.

City Manager Richard Meyers cited ongoing construction involving lead in the Armory and alley access as reasons for not issuing the permit, but did not rule out the possibility in future years.

The market's current permitted space can accommodate up to 25 vendors in the neighboring park and parking lot, though Mull said she has a list of more than 35 vendors and access issues preclude fully utilizing the space they've been given.

For now, Mull has her eyes set on not just improving the market, but also the energy it attracts.

"I'm trying to actively work with making this a vibrant downtown," she said.

This year's market runs May 2 to Oct. 31.

# Worship Directory

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| <p><b>Cottage Grove Bible Church</b><br/>                 1200 East Quincy Avenue<br/>                 541-942-4771<br/>                 Pastor:Bob Singer<br/>                 Worship 11am<br/>                 Sunday School:9:45am<br/>                 AWANA age 3-8th Grade,<br/>                 Wednesdays Sept-May, 6:30pm<br/>                 www.cg bible.org</p> | <p><b>Old Time Gospel Fellowship</b><br/>                 103 S. 5th St. • 541-942-4999<br/>                 Pastor: Jim Edwards<br/>                 Sunday Service: 10:00am<br/>                 Join in Traditional Christian Worship</p>   | <p><b>CRESWELL:</b><br/>                 Creswell Presbyterian Church<br/>                 75 S 4th S • 541-895-3419<br/>                 Rev. Seth Wheeler<br/>                 Adult Sunday School 9:15am<br/>                 Sunday Worship Service 10:30 am<br/>                 website www.creswellpres.org</p>  |
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