

There is a Time to Plant and Harvest

By Pat Walker

Franklin County Farmers' Market Manager

In the Spring the red, beautiful strawberries are placed upon the vendors' tables. People come out no matter if it is raining hard or if there's a chill in the air. Oh, it's Spring again. Both vendors and customers alike are glad to see familiar faces. The Farmers' Market offers not only fresh local produce but friendship that grows from season to season. Each vendor has a style of display, an individual touch.

Leo Stalling does an extra spin on his sweet seedless watermelons. First he does the "thump" listening for just the right sound. Once the final decision is made, he spins the watermelon around in his hands for a quick polished look. Most of the time it's the melon in the middle of his long trailer that is just the right one. Pam Ayscue sets a display of jellies, jams, pies, breads and beautiful afghans. Her many "Best in Show" and "1st Place" ribbons from the county fair are testaments to the love and hard work she places in each item.

Vendors are of all ages with a love to plant, grow and harvest. Having a local market to bring the harvest to fills the need of providing fresh produce for the community. Also it provides a boost of income for the farmers. The Senior Voucher is a great help for our seniors. This helps make fresh fruits and vegetables more plentiful for them. Being able to shop more helps the vendors as well!

North Carolina ranks tenth in the nation as far as number of farmer's markets. For the past ten years, we have grown from 100 markets to more than 250. People are taking a closer look at where their food comes from, and they like connecting with who grows their food.

Children bring their piggy banks rattling with change, and turn it into a big watermelon. Wow! The look on their faces is priceless. We love our out-of-town visitors as they ask questions about our growing season. It becomes an interesting chat as we learn where they are from and wish them safe travels. For the past eight years, The Franklin County Farmers' Market has watched one of the youngsters grow into a college student. Keri, who learned the skills of counting change back from purchases and communicating with the public has headed off to college.

Yes, there is a time and a season for all things. As the mornings start off a bit cooler and the conversation is about how tall your collard plants are. The frost will come. Farmers' thoughts are moving ahead, thinking of what they need to do. Preparing the soil for Spring takes year-round care.

The Spring rains will come and the beautiful red strawberries will be placed on Ronald Marks' table. The Strawberry Festival begins our market season each year. The planting and harvesting begins again. The vendors and shoppers will gather under the market shelter as family and neighbors once again.

I would like to thank all of our many wonderful vendors and to invite everyone to visit the Franklin County Farmers' Market located at Shannon Village Shopping Center in Louisburg. The market is open Tuesday at 9 a.m., Friday at 8:30 a.m. and Saturday at 8a.m., until sold out.