

Ames Farmer's Market set to kick off fifth season in downtown



The Ames Farmers Market kicks off its fifth year in the Main Street Cultural District on Saturday May 2nd. This year the weekly event will be bigger and better than ever.

“This year we have at least eleven new vendors and everybody is excited,” said Lojean Petersen, Ames Main Street Farmers Market Manager. “The word is out that Ames is the place to come for a farmer’s market.”

The market, which started out as one block and has expanded to encompass two blocks, is held in the 300 and 400 blocks of Main Street in downtown Ames every Saturday morning through the end of October from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Petersen says every market attracts as many as 3,000 shoppers with features like free children’s activities, free cooking demonstrations, live music, and nearly 70 vendors.

There will also be a salsa competition in July and a chili cook-off in October. On May 2nd the market will have free face painting provided by Joyful Colorz and a petting zoo on May 23rd. New this year will be the Bacon Sweet and Savory contest in June.

“Ames has a wonderful and vibrant downtown area for shopping, eating, and playing,” said Cindy Hicks, Executive Director of the Main Street Cultural District. “We are thrilled to have the market back this year to showcase what Main Street has to offer the community.”

Petersen says shoppers can expect to find locally grown and made goods such as fruits and vegetables, bedding plants, cheese, fresh eggs, fresh cut flowers, popcorn, jams and jellies, crafts, and baked goods.

“I think people want to know where their food comes from so it is important to have that connection between the grower and the consumer,” said Petersen.

Petersen, who used to live on a farm in Northwest Iowa and sell sweet corn at the Old Market in Omaha, Nebraska, has been the market manager for three years. She says it is more than just a job for her, it is a passion.

“I love it. Just the atmosphere, the music, the friendliness of the vendors,” she said. “It is just fun and family-oriented. We have good food, good music, and a good atmosphere.”

Petersen spends part of her free time going to other farmer's markets to get ideas on what would be good here. One thing she says that the Ames market has that others don't is middle of the street seating with umbrellas and tables.

"We give our shoppers the atmosphere of being able to sit, relax and enjoy the music," she said. "I like our set up."

If you are interested in becoming a vendor you can find information on the website, www.amesmainstreetfarmersmarket.com. There is no deadline for signing up.