

Annual Report 2014 – German Coast Farmers’ Market

In 2014, German Coast Farmers’ Market continued to operate at two market locations. The 2 markets were open for a total of 83 days. Both sites are provided at no charge by the owner.

The opening of the West Bank site continues to be a popular addition to market location and time, and the monthly Arts Markets, while small, continue to bring new customers to the market. An afternoon market is a challenging time for potential vendors and recruiting additional vendors for this market has been difficult recent applications have been received and market is expanding.

As GCFM received its 501(c) (3) Federal non-profit status in 2011 (quite an achievement as many farmers’ markets have not been able to qualify in this category), we continue to hope that this will now allow the market to be more active in the search for grants and sponsorship.

Market Data

East Bank patron count for 2014 was 19,240 and West Bank patron count was 8718 for a total of 27,958. Vendor reported sales at both markets totaled \$181,912.50 in 2014 with total sales for East Bank of \$140,800 and for West Bank of \$41,112.50. Health and weather issues for some of our most productive vendors have taken a toll, as well as closures for multiple storm days and Christmas, resulting in lower total sales at the market.

Per capita spending on the East Bank was \$7.32, on the West Bank \$4.72 and averaged for both markets at \$6.51. We are optimistic that most of our vendors will continue to hold on and we hope that as 2015 progresses, vendor sales will return to the strength of previous years.

Cooperative Endeavor with St. Charles Parish

GCFM continues to be provided with vital assistance from St. Charles Parish, with a Cooperative Endeavor Grant of \$25,000. No farmers’ markets in the US are able to continue/subsidy without this type of support. Per request by the St. Charles Parish Council this grant will be reduced to \$20,000 for 2015.

Market Venues

Strong community support continues to be demonstrated by the provision of market venues at no charge at both market sites. GCFM is grateful to Ormond Plantation and St. Charles Plaza for their support in this fashion.

Market Staffing & Volunteers

- Volunteers are the heartbeat of the market. Over 3221 hours were provided in the year, in market booth, board management, financial management, program development, marketing and advertising, correspondence, meetings, volunteer scheduling and other activities. On advice from proper procedure for calculating the value of volunteer hours, we are computing half our hours at minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour for market staff. This computes to over \$23,352.25 value for the year donated in volunteer time to the market. Volunteer manpower continues to be a challenge for the market, both in finding board members and in finding volunteers to work on market day.
- As always, the GCFM Board meets monthly and spends considerable time in reviewing our By-laws, Market Rules and Regulations, and Arts Market Regulations to insure that they reflect current market operations. Board members also expend time in volunteering at each market managing the GCFM's Welcome Booth.
- The market has only one employee, the Market Site Coordinator, and has contracts for services such as the market newsletter, website and publicity, and bookkeeping. The excellent service provided in these areas has been a real boost to market operations and we cannot provide enough praise for the people who carry out these operations.

Grants, Seedling Cards, Donations & Revenue

GCFM has been active in applying for and receiving grants and would welcome the ability to work with the Grants Officer for SCP and future grants. We waited to begin an active search for grants until the confirmation of our federal non-profit status and with that now approved, we hope to work more actively with our parish grants office.

- Grants received totaled \$1000.00
- Seedling Cards to support the market totaled \$410.00
- Sales of books, etc. totaled \$826.00
- Booth rent to vendors totaled \$16,374.00
- Membership Fees to vendors totaled \$1,165.00

Activities

- **Special Activities** - GCFM has made available special activities on almost all market days, having produced a very exciting calendar:
 - Live Musical Performances
 - Crafts
 - Children's Activities
 - Library Events
 - Book Signings
 - Special Cooking Events
 - Cookbook Exchange
 - Master Gardener's Plant Exchange and other master gardener events

- Pony and Hay Rides and Petting Zoos
- Arbor Day Tree Give-away
- Parades and Costume Contests
- Other activities (which are itemized by date on the quarterly reports provided to the Economic Development Department of SCP).

Market Website and Grapevine (Market Newsletter) and Advertising

These two elements continue to be very visible and active and are very effective. The Market produces an e-newsletter twice a week which is attractive, informative and an important tool for enticing people to visit the markets. Patrons continue to provide excellent feedback on receiving their newsletters. We solicit email addresses at every market and at any other venues where the market has a presence. GCFM has actively pursued increasing the newsletter email list and this strategy has proved to be a very effective marketing tool.

With a new format for the newsletter including increased information, seasonal recipe index which is now located on website and other attractive links, the newsletter has become even more useful and educational to our customers.

Website and Newsletter Data

ACTIVITY	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Website Visitor Count	34,635	46,102	54,225	62,438	71,675
Unique Visitors to Website	6052	7696	6179	6012	7122
Active E-newsletter Subscribers	2009	1975	2049	2164	2206
Facebook Fan “Likes”	201	575	873	1272	1628
Patron Surveys Completed	304	344	189	260	311

Resident Business & Entrepreneurship Program

GCFM continues to work to increase vendor selling opportunities by developing relationships with the Edible Enterprises Food Incubator Program (EEFIP), local restaurants, hospitals, retail outlets and the St. Charles Parish Public School System. GCFM refers all vendors who would find this service useful to the Edible Enterprises for information and consultation.

As certified kitchen requirement has been waived and several of our food vendors are now operating under the Cottage Law, we hope to work with Edible Enterprises in developing programs to assist food vendors in meeting all safety requirements. Our food vendors are required to take the food preparation course offered by the state and must comply with temperature and safety controls, but we hope that Edible Enterprises will be able to offer programs regarding labeling, marketing, etc., without vendors having to take the costly full food preparation course as this would be repetitious and a financial burden to fledgling vendors just starting out. As of now, the application process takes a good bit of time and cost is prohibitive for most. The markets have served as a springboard for several vendors having attended Edible Enterprises for more lucrative venues which proves that the Incubator is fulfilling its

mission. However, there are many who wish only to participate at the local farmers' markets and do not need the total intensive package now required. We strive to work with the Department of Economic Development and Edible Enterprises to develop a farmers' market partnership to generate programs to enhance vendor participation.

Tourism

The market continues to be a source of tourism information for visitors, providing information to local attractions, historical sites, and restaurants. A Heritage Education brochure has been printed and is distributed at the markets. Books on local history and cooking are sold at the Welcome Booth. Volunteers at the market are often called upon to direct customers to local resources, including genealogical and historical societies and other organizations.

The Pictorial History, as well as books by local authors, is available at the market, often with book signings by the authors. The market continues to be an outlet for local information and history for visitors and residents alike.

Board members have contacted touring groups and have had interest from one group in bringing tours to the Saturday market as part of their River Road excursion.

Senior Nutrition Program

La. Department of Agriculture & Forestry has signed up farmers and patrons for this program since it began in July 2008 and the program continues to be popular.

Data will be available after January 31, 2015 and will be forwarded as received.

Demonstrations

The Markets has live cooking demonstrations by chefs from St. Charles Parish Hospital, Ormond Plantation and others who lecture on preparing local foods with emphasis on market produce and products.

Vendor Recruitment & Development

- GCFM actively continues to recruit additional vendors from our regional base. The market provides information targeted to increasing sales for vendors, including marketing techniques as well as basic information which vendor members of the market need.
- GCFM continues to provide information to our vendors regarding all the permits required to become members – both from SCP taxing authorities, P & Z Dept., and health authorities.
- Health and safety are always one of our priorities and vendors are monitored regarding safe preparation and handling.

Challenges for 2015 and Beyond

- Recruit and increase both board members and market day volunteers

- Continue to work with P & Z, taxing and health authority to develop a comprehensive and streamlined procedure for vendor permits to qualify for market membership
- Work with SCP grants officer on possibility of assistance with market grants
- Review and upgrade physical requirements at each market (electricity, safety, etc)
- Assist vendors in broadening their offerings, especially in the farming area
- Continue to build our customer base
- Continue to search for new vendors to fill gaps in product offerings
- Continue to provide information to residents and tourists about SCP attractions
- Develop a plan for an all weather venue for at least one of the markets (either in the same location or a different location)
- Work to develop a plan for sustainability of the market administration

The Board of GCFM is very much looking forward to an improved year in 2015. We continue to meet with enthusiasm from both vendors and customers and feel that our efforts to bring farm fresh and value added products to the community and help small businesses develop and thrive are being met with success.

We could not accomplish this without the support of our parish and the Economic Development Department. We hope this partnership will continue to grow and sustain the market.