

## **Jacksonville Main Street Farmers' Market on the Square**

**Jacksonville Main Street** of Jacksonville, IL received \$6,128 to promote the Jacksonville Main Street farmers market with advertising, signage, and other promotions aimed at attracting new vendors and customers to the market.

### **Final Report**

## **G-0770 Final Report for Jacksonville Main Street's Farmers Market on the Square**

The 2009 Farmers Market on the Square marked Jacksonville Main Street's third year operating the downtown market that dates back more than three decades. It was also the most successful Farmers Market to date, due in part to the USDA Promotion Grant and unseasonable comfortable weather.

While 2009 presented the wettest year for Illinois in nearly a century and was not particularly conducive to growing all crops, it coincidentally stopped raining virtually every Wednesday just in time for vendors to set up their free booths! This year, the Farmers Market averaged ten vendors each week, an increase of 40% over last year. These vendors reported an increase in sales averaging 25% over the 2008 downtown market. Attendance numbers were also up, with an average of 80 people a week. The months of June, July, and August proved most profitable for vendors with record crowds of over 100 each week patronizing approximately 15-20 vendor booths and enjoying comfortable weather conditions.

Though the weather was pleasant for most market dates, there were some adverse conditions during the season. One major summer storm destroyed a site banner and damaged some signage, which was replaced. Otherwise, organizers incurred no unexpected expenses for the season.

Vendors offered a wider variety of unusual crops for sale during the 2009 Farmers Market on the Square season as well. In addition to specialty berries, pears, and apples, there was a greater selection of herbs, plants, honey flavors, and home-baked products. Organic gnat repellent and fresh barbecue sauces were other new products made with locally grown crops.

Early in the season, the cost for cable advertising rose dramatically over the estimates from last year. Jacksonville Main Street was able to negotiate a free listing on the cable television information channel, but production costs made the advertising package out of reach, so the marketing efforts were concentrated on local radio and newspaper media.

Throughout the grant cycle, print ads ran in seven regional newspapers and three newsletters, reaching over 90,000 readers in five counties. Direct mail postcards sent to area growers boosted vendor participation from as far as 80 miles away. Radio ads broadcasted on five area stations promoted the event at various times every week throughout the entire season. Jacksonville Main Street's non-profit status also leveraged nearly \$300 in free or discounted advertising. Organizers listed the event in area calendar services and on several web sites to maximize low-cost advertising. Volunteers posted flyers in the spring, routinely replaced damaged posters, and added new locations throughout the season.

The late afternoon time of this market remains popular with the working customers who typically shop there. The overall budget for the Farmers Market on the Square proved to be reasonable and Jacksonville Main Street tallied the expenses to be closely in line with the amounts originally submitted.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jacksonville Main Street