

## **From Farm to Market**

**Brunswick Main Street, Inc.** of Brunswick, MD received \$5,600 to start a farmers market in downtown Brunswick, Maryland. Funds were used to recruit and train vendors, and to purchase promotional materials, signs and other equipment for the market.

## **Final Report**

• **Project Summary:** There has always been a great need for a Farmers' Market in Brunswick. We started one in the summer of 2008 that was very successful. Brunswick residents were already very informed of the benefits of a Farmers' Market and understood the differences between it and a grocery store. The town has really pushed for us to start one and so we did.

• **Project Approach:** This year Brunswick Main Street set out to continue it's Farmers' Market to not only have a place where area residents could find local produce, but also to attract new shoppers to the Downtown Area. We applied to the USDA for funding and received \$5600 as well applied to the Community Foundation of Frederick County's Agriculture Viability Grant and received \$2435.68 for a total of \$8035.68 to promote the event. We contracted out the work to a group called Agro Depot to recruit the vendors and to manage the event. Agro Depot would charge a nominal fee for booth space as well as 20% of each of the vendor's sales to pay for their services. They also worked as an absentee vendor for vendors that could not make the drive each week to sell their goods. The event would run from May through October, every Wednesday night from 4-8pm. Agro Depot located themselves near the MARC train station to attract commuters coming off the train each day with the hope that these people would stop at the market first on their way home. This was to create a "grab and go" approach to the Farm Market approach to commuters that are in a rush to get off the train and back to their homes each night.

• **Goals, Outputs, and Outcomes Achieved.** Descriptions of the results, outputs, outcomes, accomplishments, and conclusions.

**Outputs –** On average we had 8 vendors participate. Brunswick Main Street's Director, Agro-Depot, and Agro-Depot's market manager put in a lot of time each week for this market. We marketed the event through ads in the local newspaper as well as postcard style mail-outs to residents in two most local zip code areas. Brunswick Main Street purchased a tent for us to market Downtown businesses as well as create a regular space for volunteers to congregate to get the market ready each week. This location was also where our manger could talk to shoppers and find out where they were coming from to know how to better target our shopping audience. Grant money was used to purchase the tent and also sandwich style sign boards and road signs to market the event time and location. We printed up rack cards, posters, and a banner, all paid for through the grant to market to all area residents and businesses. We even gave out canvas shopping bags with our logo on them to promote green shopping.

**Outcomes –** The market was well shopped by the commuters. The town enjoyed being able to talk to farmers from the area and buy directly. We all enjoyed knowing how our food got from seed to table. We were able to educate the public as to why organically grown produce and meats can be more expensive and what is truly means to be organic.

• **Beneficiaries.** The beneficiaries of this project were the residents of Brunswick and surrounding areas. Over 60% of the shoppers were commuters coming off the MARC train. A lot of people began shopping here because they had been reading online about

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the idea of shopping local and buying green. We defiantly plan on having this market again next year.

- Lessons Learned: It was slow to get started as the weather wasn't always cooperating with our scheduled times to be open. Also commuters, after sitting on a train for over an hour, wanted only to get in their cars and rush home. We did however manage to attract a small regular group of commuters to stop and shop at the market and the majority of our shoppers (about 60%) were coming off the MARC train. Having the event on a Wednesday night instead of on a weekend really detracted our regular group of shoppers that we had attending in the past year. We also received several complaints that the prices were too high which was partly due to the 20% mark up that Agro Depot was putting on the vendors for their fee. This contributed to low attendance of vendors in the coming months, which resulted in fewer shoppers, as the same items that were available earlier were not offered as the vendor list dwindled. Many people complained to us that Agro Depot was acting as a "middle man" with their absentee style and that this was not promoting the local idea of talking to the actual farmer that you are buying produce from. This was not how we had done our market in the past, but were trying something new this year to see how successful or unsuccessful it would be. The last few market nights in October were either canceled or closed up early due to a complete lack of shoppers.

- Additional information: N/A

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