

The Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association of Ham Lake, MN, received \$100,000 to advertise a cost-share program, put on marketing workshops, and provide targeted point-of-sale materials for local fruit and vegetable producers at pick-your-own operations, on-farm markets, and organized farmers markets.

[Final Report FY 09](#)

Farmers' Market Promotion Program

Final Performance Report

Date: June 15, 2012
Recipient Name: Minnesota Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association
Title of Project: Providing Resources to Help Minnesota Direct Marketers Grow and Sustain their Operations through Needed Education, Targeted Point-of-Sale Material and Cost-share Advertising
Grant Number: 12-25-G-0949
Location (City/State): Ham Lake, MN

Project Summary:

With the emphasis on better nutrition, local foods and food safety, marketing strategies must go beyond typical displays and newspaper ads, but producers don't always know where to start or how to cost-effectively modify or expand their marketing programs. Through this partnership with the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program, the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (MFVGA) has been able to provide direct benefits to area specialty crop producers through educational workshops, an advertising cost-share program and targeted point-of-sale materials to help producers more effectively market their products and encourage consumers to increase their purchases of safe, locally produced fruits and vegetables.

Project Approach:

MFVGA has held an annual educational conference since 1952 with the primary emphasis on improving production. Annual conferences have included marketing sessions, but our members were asking for more in-depth information on marketing strategies. This project sponsored two marketing workshops; one in January of 2010 and one in March of 2011. More information is included below.

Groups of berry producers were previously able to get advertising cost-share dollars through the Minnesota Grown program, but that opportunity was discontinued. We offered an advertising cost-share opportunity for all MFVGA members who were direct marketing their product. The project was available to members for the 2010 and 2011 growing seasons.

The third component of the project was point-of-sale printed materials that gave consumers information on how to freeze or prepare some of the items found at the markets or at pick-your-own operations. Input was sought from MFVGA members so the material would be relevant and meaningful for them and their customers. This allowed us to print larger quantities and offer quality printed materials to smaller producers for a reasonable cost.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved:

Marketing Workshops

The first was held in conjunction with the 2010 Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference. Don Goodwin from Golden Sun Marketing conducted an afternoon workshop on January 21, 2010 and spoke at the banquet that evening. Thirty two producers attended the afternoon

workshop titled "Marketing Authenticity." Approximately 80 producers and agri-business professionals attended the banquet and heard Mr. Goodwin talk on the topic "Thriving in Agriculture During a Down Economy." Comments from the evaluations were very positive and producers were empowered and re-energized in their role as local agricultural producers. He also gave producers a number of useful tips on how they could use websites and other promotional materials to help "brand" their farms and themselves to put them in a better position to take advantage of increasing interest in local foods and local markets.

We held a separate full-day marketing conference in March of 2011 featuring Bob Negen from WhizBang Training! in Michigan. He shared "Secrets to Super Successful Local Marketing in 2011!" during a workshop in St. Cloud, MN on March 29, 2011. Approximately 70 people attended. The response from producers was excellent and many of them used the information in developing their marketing plans for the 2011 season.

Comments from participants included the following:

- Very worthwhile. I will be able to apply much of what I learned.
- The speaker was very well prepared, adapted info to our needs, very perceptive as to if audience was following – Excellent!
- Very in-depth, detailed. I liked that time was spent in detail on various topics.
- Lots of great, practical info.
- Lots of ideas I will be implementing. Great ideas!
- Did the workshop meet your expectations? – Beyond my wildest dream – best ever.
- I am very impressed that he took our industry into the workshop & made it all pertain to what we actually do. Other workshops I have been to the speaker was clueless about the industry. I can see how to take my business to the next level.

One attendee commented "have Bob Negen come back and share his other series. Keep having him come back until he has shared all of his information and then start all over again." He shared very useful and easy to implement ideas and he took the time to engage the audience with questions and comments. It was a day filled with good, practical and useable information.

Cost-share Advertising

The cost-share advertising program was made available to all MFVGA members involved in direct marketing their products. The MFVGA Board of Directors established guidelines and applications were sent with membership renewal materials. Reminders and additional information was included in the MFVGA newsletter. We tried to keep the application process to a minimum of paperwork and producers were strongly encouraged to try something new. Producers were required to provide summary information on their marketing plan and how they would use the cost-share dollars. Applications were reviewed and generally approved. Approved applicants were required to submit proof that the projects had been completed along with copies of invoices substantiating expenses.

We had very positive responses from producers who benefitted from this program. The cost-share dollars allowed them to try new marketing approaches, implement some of the ideas they learned during the marketing workshops and expand their efforts to reach new customers. Some of the producers used radio and television ads and live broadcasts from the farm or market. Some increased the amount of print advertising or added color to their ads. Some of them added road signs to make it easier for people to find the pick-your-own or market. Some of them created websites.

Those who participated were extremely appreciative of the additional advertising they were able to do with these dollars.

We also encountered several problems with this part of the project. We encouraged full participation, but participation was less than we anticipated. Participation was limited to membership, but new members were eligible to participate and were welcome to participate. We actively encouraged participation in the MFVGA newsletter, in direct mailings to members and at the annual conference. We had hoped for 100 to 200 applications and we received a total of 65 over the two-year period. A number of the approved projects were not completed. The weather was a factor in several cases where producers didn't have a crop to market or couldn't complete their plans because of a negative impact on the crop. One producer was hit by a tornado that destroyed the business and all of their efforts were put into rebuilding. In some cases, producers changed their minds and decided not to do the project or did substantially less than what they had said they would. Some simply decided not to submit for reimbursement. In other cases other farm projects took precedence and there wasn't time or money to complete the advertising projects, even with the cost-share incentive.

Point-of-Sale Materials

Materials are only relevant if they meet the needs of the producers and are useful to the consumers. Our goal was to develop material that could be easily distributed by producers that contained information useful for consumers that would also encourage consumers to increase their purchases of local fresh fruits and vegetables. We asked MFVGA members for their input on the type of information that would be useful and we asked them to share their favorite recipes and ways to use some of their products. Material was reviewed by MFVGA board members and University of Minnesota Food Science Educators as it was being developed. We thank them for their input and suggestions.

Beneficiaries: Area fruit and vegetable producers were direct beneficiaries of this project.

Marketing workshops: One hundred and twelve people were encouraged and empowered by Don Goodwin's affirmation of the importance of the work they do every day. Current economic conditions weren't good and the cost of production was increasing rapidly. They were discouraged and Don Goodwin revitalized them and made them anxious to see the start of a new season. Their customers also had direct benefit with the availability of healthy local food.

Seventy people benefitted from the marketing expertise and practical and useful tips shared by Bob Negen in March of 2011. As the cost-share advertising information came back to the office we saw examples of how people who attended that workshop were successfully using that information and building their customer base.

Advertising cost-share program: The producers who completed projects and submitted for reimbursement are the direct beneficiaries. Producers and customers throughout the region received indirect benefit. Every radio ad, television ad, newspaper ad, road sign, etc. helped to raise the level of awareness and availability of local fruits and vegetables and reminded people to visit their own local producers and farmers' markets whether that was the producer or market that was advertised or not.

Point-of-sale materials: Materials are available to MFVGA members. There are currently about 165 direct member farms. We welcome new members and membership is open to any commercial fruit or vegetable growers in the area. We have members in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa,

Wisconsin and Nebraska. Every customer who receives information on how to preserve or use fresh fruits and vegetables also benefits when they increase consumption of healthy local food choices.

The Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association has also benefitted. We have been able to offer programming and resources that we would not have been able to offer without this assistance from the Farmers' Market Promotion Program.

Lessons Learned:

This project encountered and weathered several problems and delays. Each of these components had its own set of challenges. We had originally identified and contacted a marketing speaker from Canada, but because of US economic issues were not able to bring her in to do a workshop. That meant starting again at 'square 1' to find an excellent speaker who fit within our budget. We found an excellent speaker, but because of the resulting time constraints were not able to promote the workshop as much or as early as we had planned.

We also learned that life can get in the way. Everyone thought the cost-share advertising program was a wonderful idea. Today's reality is that everyone is very busy and time is stretched too thin. We tried to require as little time as possible to complete the paperwork, but sometimes even a little extra time is too much. We encouraged creativity and that requires a little extra time, too. Sometimes there just isn't enough time to go around and in this case, people made the choice not to participate in the program even though they acknowledged it was a great idea.

Dollars that were originally budgeted for the advertising cost-share were reallocated and additional POS materials were printed.

Additional Information:

Enclosed are pictures from the marketing conferences, pictures of some of the cost-share advertising projects and copies of the point-of-sale materials.

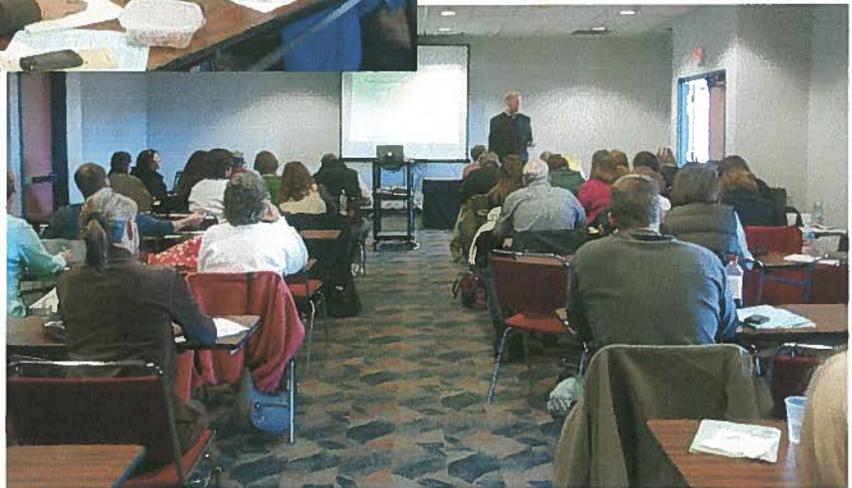
Contact Person:

Marilyn Nysetvold Johnson
MFVGA
763-434-0400
mfvga@msn.com

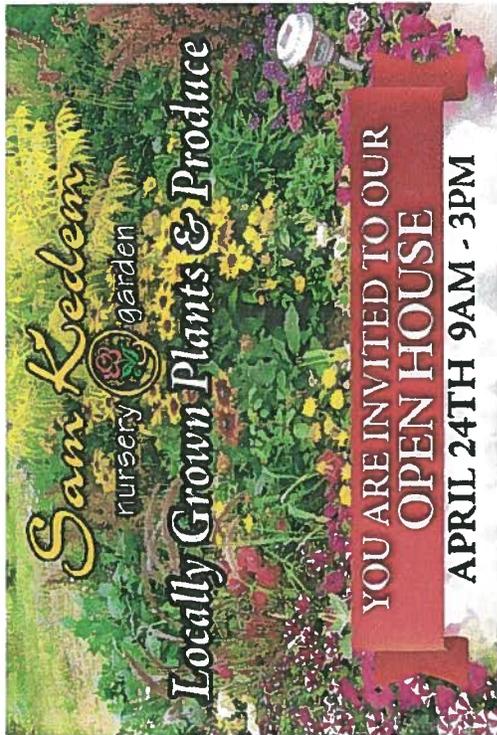
Marketing Workshop with Don Goodwin January 2010



Marketing Workshop with Bob Negen March 2011



Direct Mail Pieces



NEW STRAWBERRY INFORMATION

To provide the best quality of strawberries for our customers we only kept a small field this year. Plus we have decided to down size our strawberry production as our family labor leaves home. We will not have enough for pick-your-own, but will take orders for pre-picked berries and sell at local farmer's markets. Our farm is 4.5 miles south of Arlington on Co. Rd #9 1.5 miles west on 286 ST.



Please call NOW (507) 237-2247 to reserve pre-picked strawberries at \$3.95 per quart.

We did plant a new field and plan to continue offering pre-picked berries. Next year we'd like to send this information by email. Please send your email address to kathleensgardens@hotmail.com if you'd like to stay on the list. We have enjoyed meeting so many nice people and for 2010 just call ahead and we'll do the picking.

Kevin & Kathleen Thies
Andrew & Sam

Keep this card for our telephone number
(507) 237-2247

Kathleen's Gardens

42612 286 Street, Arlington, MN 55307



*This postcard is based on work supported under the Farmer's Market Promotion Program Grant Program, Agricultural Marketing Services, USDA, under Award No. 12-23-G-0949 with the MN Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Certified Organic Strawberries

Holmes City Berries... est. 1994



The next generation of Leopold berry growers begins with the birth of Blake. Photo on 1-12-2009.

Call for Date of Season Opening & for Picking Conditions.

We are open weekdays and weekends - 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Our farm is located on the south side of Hwy 27, 10 miles west of Alexandria. Already-picked berries are available daily at the farm and at our truck located at the Cenex Station in Alexandria - 1705 Broadway.

We expect the season to begin around June 19th.

Call 320-886-5382

320-886-5382 www.hcberries.com

Little Miss Strawberry Coronation

Come join in the fun and *free sundae* at Holmes City Berries and view the coronation of Little Miss Strawberry for 2010! There will be fun activities for children. The Douglas County Dairy Princesses will be on hand to crown the Little Miss, Friday evening, June 18th at 7:30 p.m. They will also be serving *free ice cream sundaes* from 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Little Miss Strawberry, Emma Rose Maignard, will be present to draw the winning name for the 2010 Little Miss. Shown in the photo below, 2009 Douglas County Dairy Princesses and Little Miss, Meg Hintzen, Emma Rose Maignard, Samantha Massmann.

Contest Rules: Entry name and photo must be received by 6-16-10. Open to ages 4-6. Send name and photo to Holmes City Berries, PO Box 16, Holmes City, MN 56341. Questions call 886-5382. All photo entries will be made into a collage for the 2010 season. The winner will be determined by a drawing at 7:30 p.m. on June 18. Little Miss will be awarded a \$15 photo session with Heidi Rissas. Photography by Kelli, an Alexandria area photographer. Photo session will be scheduled by winner. Everyone welcome!



Holmes City Berries
PO Box 16
Holmes City, MN 56341
Return Service Requested

Order Michigan Fruit!

Name: _____
Address: _____
Home Phone: _____
Work Phone: _____
E-mail: _____
Special Instructions: _____

Quantity	Price	Total
Blueberries	X \$35 ⁰⁰	
Sweet Dark Cherries	X \$35 ⁰⁰	
Rainier Cherries	X \$3 ⁰⁰	
Tart Pie Cherries	X \$3 ⁰⁰	
Total		

Enclosed (90% of total)
Amount due at pickup

Blueberries: Plump and especially sweet, our blueberries keep well in your refrigerator or bag throughout the winter in your freezer. Tentative arrival: Mid/End July.
10-lb. box: \$33.00

Sweet Dark Cherries: Tree ripened, for fresh eating, canning or freezing. Tentative arrival: Mid/End July.
10-lb. box: \$35.00

Rainier Cherries: Yellow, slight red blush, firm, keeps well, refreshing flavor. Tentative arrival: Mid/End July.
10-lb. box: \$33.00

Pie Cherries: Tree ripened, for canning and freezing, great for jam and pies. Need to be used very soon. Will not keep as long as the other cherries. Tentative arrival: Mid/End July.
10-lb. box: \$35.00

Mail order to:
Holmes City Berries
PO Box 16
Holmes City, MN 56341



Celebrating 150 Years of History!

To Order: Clip, mail, or drop off order form along with a 50% deposit. We will call or mail you when your fruit is available for pick-up at our farm. We can accept orders through July 10, but we recommend you order soon. If you are not fully satisfied with your fruit, simply return it for a complete refund. Thank you! Brothers, Cory, Larry & Darren Leopold

MAIL TO:
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MARSHALL, MN
PERMIT NO. 23

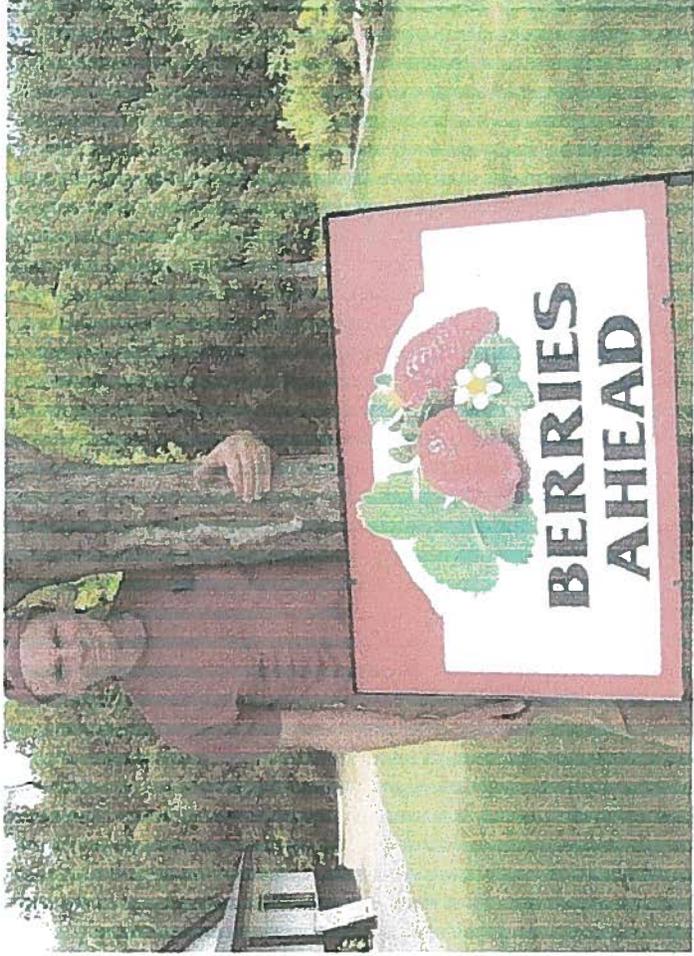
Little Miss Strawberry Coronation
Friday, June 18th, 2010
7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

*This publication is based on work supported under the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) Grant Program, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, under Accord No. 12-25-6-89-69 with the Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

BIG Signs:



Small Signs



Newspaper Ads



Strawberries

Pick your own and
Pre-picked available by order
Open: Monday-Saturday ~ 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Sunday ~ 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Please call ahead to confirm availability at 507-641-6655

Harvest

Located 8.5 miles
West of Redwood Falls
on Hwy 19

Ad is partially funded by USDA FMPP grant through MFTVGA.



THE HARVEST
IS OPEN
SELLING...

Beans, Beets, Peppers,
Summer Squash,
Delicious Fresh
Potatoes, Egg Plants
and much more!
Fresh Vegetables
all picked DAILY!

Also Available - Jason Haan's
Fresh Farm Eggs

The Harvest
1/4 North of Lennox
OPEN ALL DAY
Closed Sundays

605-647-2707 605-321-6012
This ad is partially funded by a USDA
FMPP grant through MFTVGA.



**BROUWER
BERRIES**

320-967-4718
www.brouwerberries.com

This ad is partially funded by a USDA FMPP grant through MFTVGA.



SLEEPY HOLLOW FARMS

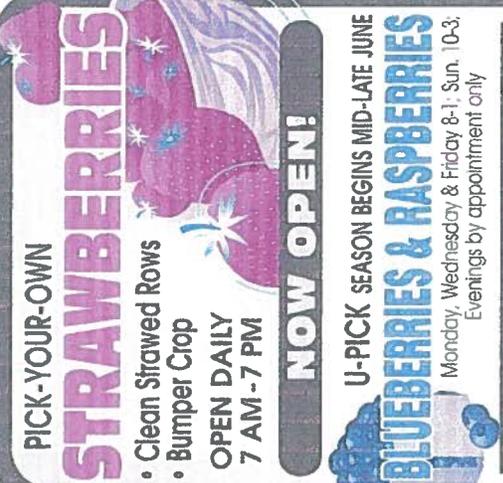
**PICK
YOUR
OWN
Pumpkin
Patch**

Now Open
Sept 26th-Oct. 31st
M-F 10-6:30pm
Sat & Sun 10-Dusk

- Mini Pumpkins
- Squash
- Gourds
- Decorative Corn
- Corn Stalk Bundles
- Straw Bales

251-5112

3 1/2 Miles South of St. Augusta, on Cty Rd 7
Left at 228th Street, Watch for signs



**PICK-YOUR-OWN
STRAWBERRIES**

- Clean Strawed Rows
- Bumper Crop

**OPEN DAILY
7 AM - 7 PM**

NOW OPEN!

**U-PICK SEASON BEGINS MID-LATE JUNE
BLUEBERRIES & RASPBERRIES**

Monday, Wednesday & Friday 8-1; Sun. 10-3;
Evenings by appointment only

"THE STRAWBERRY BASKET"
Monticello (Loc. 3 mi. W. of Downtown Monticello)
763-878-2875 • www.strawberrymbasket.com
Visit our Website for complete Dates, Times, Directions & Policies
*This ad is partially funded by a USDA FMPP grant through MFTVGA.

701-367-9808 400

NOTICES

STILL HAVE DELICIOUS FRESH POTATOES, and 3 kinds of squash. Also all kinds of fall decorating items. Corn shocks, gourds, colored corn, pumpkins, and decorating items and ideas in "The Barn" THE HARVEST, 1/4 north of Lennox. Closed Sundays.

