Support local farmers today

County farmers market opens this morning

BY MIKAYLA KREUZBERGER
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — Despite cooler weather and a chance of intermittent May showers, the Foothills Heritage Market, a countywide farmers market, opens today at 8 a.m. until noon in Westminster.

Sponsored by the Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair, today's event includes an array of activities in addition to "going to market," such as hot, homemade breakfasts, bluegrass music and fun activities for children.

"There's been a lot of blood, sweat and tears put into making this farmers market a reality," said Nate Philyaw, of Three Oaks Nursery.

Philyaw said his family-owned nursery helped piece together the greenhouse structure that could hold roughly 20 vendors, rain or shine.

"The structure is up, the outside kitchen is ready to make breakfast, and there's power and water at the site," he said. "There is a portable bathroom on site, too."

The market is at 178 Hayfield Road, directly across from Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative on Highway 123.

Philyaw said Three Oaks would have onions, beets and a variety of native plants at today's market.

"We're expecting a good turnout Saturday," Philyaw said.

His nursery, at 222 N. Seed Farm Road, also grows tomatoes, cucumbers, okra, beans and specialty peppers.

Jason Davis said he was getting up at 5 a.m. today to pick fresh produce at Calyx Farms in West Union to take to market.

Davis and his mother-and-law, Janet Neville, are in their first year of hydroponically growing a variety of lettuce and fresh greens, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and squash.

Walking into the Calyx greenhouses, one quickly notices the hydroponic gardening technique as plastic piping carries nutrient-rich water to each plant.

"It's a constant feed of water. We don't use soil, we use gravel, and the roots attach to the rocks," Davis said. "We took a commercial hydroponics system and made one ourselves."

He said not only does the greenhouse allow for year-round growing, but the farm's hydroponic growing system is much more energy efficient.

SEE FARMERS, PAGE A3



JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Jason Davis picks hydroponically grown lettuce at Calyx Farms in West Union.

FARMERS MARKETS

- **Seneca** – Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 6 a.m. to noon, beginning today. Main Street.
- **Walhalla** – Saturday mornings, Thursday evenings, beginning June 1. Main Street.
- **Westminster** – Mondays and Fridays, 7 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., beginning first week of June. Depot parking lot.
- **West Union** – tentative.
- **Clemson** – Fridays, 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., beginning May 10. Patrick Square Town Center, 578 Issaqueena Trail.
- **Six Mile** – Thursdays, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Indoor facility in downtown Six Mile.
- **Pendleton** – Thursdays, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., beginning June 6. Village Green.

FARMERS: '... see the same people and build relationships'

FROM PAGE A1



PHOTOS BY JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Billy Carson, 16, of Billy's Goat Hill farm on S. Retreat Road in Westminster, is bringing an unusual item to market."We're bringing red wigglers," Carson said. "They turn compost into healthy soil."

"There's no plowing involved – a lot less machinery," he said. "We just have to run our furnaces to keep it warm in here."

Billy Carson, 16, of Billy's Goat Hill farm on S. Retreat Road in Westminster, said he's bringing an unusual item to market.

"We're bringing red wigglers," Carson said. "They turn compost into healthy soil."

The Carson family has allowed their wiggly worm friends to reside in compost buckets on their farm – they're great assisting with decomposition. In fact, Carson's mom, Gaylene, said her family traveled 3,000 miles with the wigglers in tow when they moved from the West Coast to South Carolina.

"We're going to have buckets set up to show the stages of decomposing compost. It'll be a fun way to teach kids," she said. "We'll have buckets you can take home with you that will have red wigglers in them. If you bring the bucket back at the next market, you get a reward."

Gaylene is bringing activity booklets for children that teach about the worms' job of decomposition; she'll also bring homemade herbal teas, honey, soaps and preserves that she and her son make, as well as any extra produce from their garden.

Farmers agree that going to market is a great tool for many reasons.

"We're hoping that the market can become a vehicle to gain our own customers," Davis said. "That's the plan."



The Carson family has allowed their wiggly worm friends to reside in compost buckets on their farm – they're great assisting with decomposition.

Gaylene said she hopes to teach other children the importance of farming, something she said Billy has a passion for.

Foothills Heritage Market's Stanley Gibson said he believes that in addition to self-advertising, farmers also come to get rid of excess and to socialize.

"People who have home gardens don't want their plants to go to waste," Gibson said. "Also, you go to these markets, see the same people and build relationships. You can get pointers from one another."

Visit Foothills Heritage Market today to learn more about how to become a vendor. For information, visit Foothills Heritage Market at www.foothillsheritagemarket.org or on Facebook.

mikayla@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6681
Follow on Twitter @mik...