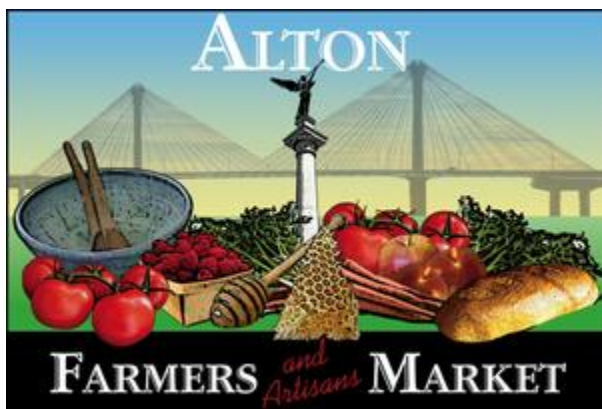




The Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market Starts Saturday, June 1st

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The Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market starts on Saturday, June 1st, in the parking lot at the corner of 9th Street & Piasa St. (US Hwy 67). The Market will be in session on Saturday mornings from 8:00 a.m. until Noon and on Wednesday evenings from 4:00 until 7:00 p.m. through October 12th.

Shoppers will find a wide selection of locally-grown seasonal fruit and vegetables, including heirloom varieties and organically grown crops. Along with produce, fresh cut flowers, potted plants, grass-fed meat, local honey, fresh bread and other baked goods will be available, along with a large assortment of hand-crafted artwork such as pottery, stained glass, handmade soap, and woodworking items.

Alton Main Street organizes the Market, which has been in operation for approximately 20 years, as part of its efforts to revitalize the Downtown Alton historic district. In 2012, the non-profit group commissioned the creation of a large, colorful mural that frames the Market parking lot, featuring scenes of life on the Mississippi River.

The Market features a wide variety of products that are homegrown and handmade, and new vendors are welcome. Registration fees are \$10 for Saturdays and \$5 for Wednesdays; anyone who is interested is encouraged to visit the “Events” page at www.DowntownAlton.com to download the vendor registration form and bylaws.

“The market is a fun, easy, and responsible way for citizens to shop for healthy food. Fruits and vegetables are at their freshest and most nutritious when purchased locally, and the most environmentally, economically and socially responsible way to purchase your food is through local growers at the Farmers’ Market,” said Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street.

Live entertainment and special activities have been scheduled throughout the season. On June 1st Nancy Lippincott will perform on hammer dulcimer, guitar and banjo, and on June 8th, Bob Sancamper will demonstrate his artistic talents live on a pottery wheel. The Community Cultivators will provide nature crafts, and Jacoby Arts Center will provide “Arts in the Park” activities.

Organizers are also improving access to healthy foods thanks to the Illinois EBT Wireless Project grant funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The grant aims to boost the sale of Illinois-grown food and provide access to fresh produce to low-income residents by enabling Farmers’ Markets to accept Illinois Link cards, which access federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. “Having a wireless EBT machine will give our local farmers access to a whole new customer base. This will not only increase sales for our vendors, but will improve the health of our community,” said Christine Favilla of the Sierra Club who is partnering with Alton Main Street to promote this local foods initiative.

Customers that wish to use their Link benefits at the Market will be able to swipe their card at a central location in exchange for tokens. These tokens come in different denominations and are used to purchase eligible products from vendors. Also starting in July, Senior Services Plus will be distributing Senior Nutrition Coupons at the Market, which are vouchers for \$21 worth of free produce to seniors 60+ who fit income guidelines. For more information on that program, please contact SSP at 465-3298.

The event has a facebook page, found at: www.facebook.com/AltonFarmersMarket, where shoppers will be updated on what produce is in season and receive reminders on upcoming entertainment and activities.