



# **The Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market Starts Saturday, June 6th**

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ALTON – The Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market starts on Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, in the parking lot at the corner of Landmarks Blvd. and Henry St. 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 17th.

Shoppers will find a wide selection of locally-grown seasonal fruit and vegetables, including heirloom varieties and organically grown crops. Along with produce, grass-fed beef, pasture-raised poultry, farm fresh eggs, local honey, fresh bread and other baked goods will be available, along with fresh cut flowers, potted plants, and 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 23 years, as part of its efforts to revitalize the Downtown Alton historic district. The Market features a wide variety of products that are handmade or homegrown within a 50-mile radius, and new vendors are welcome. Registration fees are \$12 for Saturdays and \$5 for Wednesdays; anyone who is interested is encouraged to visit the “Events” page at [www.DowntownAlton.com](http://www.DowntownAlton.com) to download the vendor registration form and bylaws.

“The market is a fun and easy way to shop for healthy seasonal food. Fruits and vegetables are at their freshest and most nutritious when purchased locally,” said Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street. “Patronizing these local vendors truly boosts our local economy because the profit re-circulates here instead of being sent out of the area to corporations and their investors. The most environmentally, economically and socially responsible way to purchase your food is through local growers at the Farmers’ Market.”





Live entertainment and special activities have been scheduled throughout the season. On June 6<sup>th</sup> Chris Belden will perform live music, and on June 13<sup>th</sup> artist Tracy Merritt, a.k. a. “The Rusty Diva”, will demonstrate how to make your own personalized decorations

and gifts out of wooden blocks. On June 20<sup>th</sup>, Artist Bob Sancamper will demonstrate on his pottery wheel, and live music will be performed by When Universes Collide. River Bend Yoga will offer a donation-based yoga class on-site every second Saturday from May-September from 8:15-9:00 a.m.

Again in 2015, LINK cards (formerly known as food stamps) will be accepted by many vendors. Alton Main Street aims to improve access to healthy foods thanks to the Illinois EBT Wireless Project grant funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The goal is 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 an expanded customer base. This will not only increase sales for 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 Market has a facebook page, found at: [www.facebook.com/AltonFarmersMarket](http://www.facebook.com/AltonFarmersMarket) and a Twitter account @AltonMarket, where shoppers will be updated on what produce is in season and receive reminders on upcoming entertainment and activities.