



Suffolk needs more farmers' markets

Frances Staples

Suffolk News-Herald, Letters to the Editor

December 6, 2017

To the editor:

Suffolk is a farm-loving town with a unique energy that adds to the love of farmers' markets. A drive down Main Street can land you in a sea of green, luscious, crops grown by family, friends or beloved local farmers.

But besides providing a Saturday morning activity for the family, what does a farmers' market actually do?

Local gardens and markets may not offer the same low-price items as supermarkets, but the farmers of your town can guarantee fresh, local produce grown here at home.

Farmers' markets sell fruits, vegetables, fresh baked goods and products from local citizens. This allows the vendors to make more money per product than they would by selling through local farmers' markets.

Grown locally, sold locally, so the money stays local. Keeping money within the community helps boost the local economy, creating a positive feedback loop.

Farmers' markets also support families and small-town farmers. Buying from large grocery stores distances the buyer from the product.

Farmers' markets help strengthen community bonds by shortening the food chain. And the shorter food chain helps give the produce a "home-cooked" feel. The ability to meet and greet the family who grew dinner for tonight creates a tighter community, full of support for the locals who love to grow fresh fruits and vegetables.

"Farm to Table"? With a farmers' market, it should be "Garden to Hand." Farmers' markets are bringing the town closer together by showing a diverse group of people the "behind the scenes" of farming.

Thanks to the Department of Agriculture, farmers' markets can reach a wider group of people by also accepting SNAP-benefits in certain areas. By allowing a different payment method, fresh

foods are available to all socioeconomic groups. Fruits and vegetables can be appreciated by everyone in the community leading to a healthier lifestyle and a healthier town.

Of course, farmers' markets are not always the most convenient shopping method. With only a few available on certain days of the week, how are buyers able to get the full amount of produce servings throughout the week?

Currently, it is difficult to find an open market within short driving distance. Some markets are out-of-the-way, hidden gems along country roads, or only available once a week. This creates a reluctance or neglect of market shopping among those with tight schedules.

How do we fix this? Start more markets! Suffolk and the greater Tidewater area is abundant with farms local gardens and those ready to plant.

Getting involved is as easy as putting a table in front of your house and selling the vegetables you grew. Start delivering fresh foods. Start purchasing from more of your friends and family.

Let's work to fill our town with local vendors and our bellies with locally made products and good, fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables.