

Market Day in Goldendale

Saturday Market enjoys growth in its second season

By Jeanie Senior

The Goldendale Saturday Market—started last summer to stimulate trade and lure motorists off U.S. 97—this year is drawing not only tourists, but locals.

“We have a group of incredible vendors who are very dedicated to the whole open air market concept,” says organizer Earlene Sullivan, who uses words such as excitement and magic to describe the atmosphere of the market.

Best of all, “we’re seeing more local folks come,” she says. “Many of the vendors have commented on how cool that is. Last year, the majority of our customer base was definitely coming off the highway.”

Shoppers who visit the market—open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. each

Saturday on the lawn in front of the Goldendale Chamber of Commerce offices at 903 E. Broadway St.—are likely to find a diverse and enticing selection.

On a recent Saturday sale, items ranged from homemade jams and jellies to handmade wood furniture; hand-sewn, hand-knit and hand-crocheted clothing to fresh-baked pastries and bread; and honey to bird feeders and birdhouses.

“It’s always a surprise, from one week to the next, who might be showing up,” says Earlene.

Watching the vendor and customer count grow is one of the happy surprises. At the market’s launch on June 18, 2005, nine vendors and 90 customers showed up.

“By the end of the season, we were averaging right at 300 customers, and the vendor count had doubled,” says Earlene.

When the Saturday market opened May 13 this year, there were 600 customers and 22 vendors.

The next Saturday, it was windy and cold, but the market still drew 300 customers and 18 vendors.

Earlene walks around the market talking to visitors and using a clicker to keep count.

That is how she discovered the shoppers came from as far away as Australia and Germany, and California, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Washington and Oregon.

At Zane’s Honey Booth, Melinda Weiss and Diane Wilson emphasize they sell Klickitat County honey. The bees that produce the honey gather their nectar from Klickitat County wildflowers.

They also sell beeswax items, including candles and lip balm.

Melinda and Diane, who can provide reams of information on honey’s good qualities, say their most popular honey is made from the star thistle.

While “the boys”—Zane Kerns and Rob Wilson—are out looking for flowers, “we’re watching football on television and drinking beer,” they joke.

Their jesting gets a laugh from next-door vendor Debbie Mutton, whose china and crystal bird feeders sparkle in the sun.

Debbie, Diane and Melinda are market regulars.

Janis Powers of Goldendale has sold her beaded bracelets and necklaces a few times, and she says she intends to come more often.

“It’s been really good,” says Janis. “It’s just fun. Some other people I’ve talked to, they will be coming, too.”

Other core vendors include Dawley’s Trading Post, with an array of handcrafted wood furniture—from chairs to beds—made by Eugene Dawley. Barbara Dawley sometimes dons period clothing in keeping with her husband’s products.

Vendor Ruth White sells plants, signs and planters; Betty Crenna sells plants; retired school teacher Arlene Dolan sells silk flower centerpieces; and Smoky and Norma Baasch handcraft birdhouses and



Saturday Market organizer Earlene Sullivan, center, chats under the tent with booth vendors Smoky and Norma Baasch.



Melinda Weiss and Diane Wilson enjoy a laugh at Zane's Honey booth.

bird feeders.

Jennifer Holycross offers a selection of fresh fruit jams and jellies; Sharon Reese knits slippers, socks and booties.

Other market stalwarts include jewelry makers Lorri and Jerry Carr; Annette Ruckert's Moonrise Jewelry; Larry and Karen Tremble, with birdhouse decor; Gayla Frey, who sews little girl dresses, baby garments and quilts; artist Charlene Morrison, who sells watercolors and drawings; Melodee Goodrich, who makes soaps and toiletries; Carol and Robert Thatcher, who sells scarves, cookies and kitchen towels; and Dave and Jude Carol's ice candles.

The "Singing Chef" Tom Beck—who with his wife sells hot dogs and German sausages—entertains the

market with a song list of old favorites.

Baker Karla Phillips adapted recipes in an heirloom cookbook bequeathed by her grandmother for the bread, pies, cookies, scones, muffins and rolls she sells. She starts baking on Thursday to have sufficient goods for the market.

Earlene says organizers are working to attract more fresh produce to the market.

"We have advertised heavily, letting people know that we were going to be opening and that we needed fresh fruit and vegetables," she says, noting that not a lot is available until after July 4. "I hope we get some real takers that understand the importance of this. If it's an open air market, people do want fresh fruit. Fingers crossed."

There also are plans for a consignment booth where "backyard farmers" with an excess of, say, tomatoes, but who don't want to set up their own booth, can sell fruit and vegetables.

The market board also decided to let youngsters 15 and under get acquainted with the free enterprise system by allowing them booth space for free the first Saturday of each month.

The Goldendale Saturday Market is licensed with the state of Washington as an association. Vendors pay a \$5 annual membership fee, and \$5 or \$10 for market stall space, depending on size. They get a discount if they pay for the space in advance.

The market grew from a conversation

Earlene and her husband, Ron, had with Goldendale events planner Lorraine Reynolds about ways to perk up business.

"Lorraine said open air markets seem to work," Earlene recalls

Ron proposed holding a couple of meetings. Good turnouts at the meetings indicated an interest.

Last year, the season stretched an extra two months, when the market moved into a vacant storefront downtown.

Vendors already have decided not to stretch the season so long this year, although Earlene says they are discussing holding a Christmas bazaar.

A five-year business plan would expand the open air market to operate at market stalls in downtown. ■