

Healthy food is more accessible as Columbia Farmers Market open on weekdays

Becca Pasteris, KOMU 8 Reporter
Jun 1, 2021

COLUMBIA – June 1st is the first day the Columbia Farmers Market started its weekday hours for the summer season. Farmers markets are a good way to buy local and healthy food.

According to the Office of Sustainability, 31 percent of Boone County residents live in a food desert. That means they have low access to food stores. Residents in urban areas who live more than a mile away from supermarkets and residents in rural areas who live more than 10 miles away from supermarkets are in food deserts.

Check out this map from U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service to see if you live in a food desert.

Farmers markets

Boone County Farmers Market, Orr Street Farmers and Artisans Market and Columbia Farmers Market are available to the public.

The Columbia Farmers Market offers SNAP and WIC programs where the market matches up to \$35 on purchases for shoppers that have low income, have children ages 19 and under, have disabilities or are seniors.

Corinna Smith, Executive Director for the Columbia Farmers Market said, “We saw a need. Everybody eats, and we want everybody to be able to have fair access to what we offer here.”

It matches between \$30,000 to \$40,000 in total every year. The money comes from Boone County Children Services Fund and community donations. Veterans United Foundation has donated recently.

The Columbia Farmers Market is open Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon.

The Boone County Farmers Market is also open Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon, and the Orr Street Farmers and Artisans Market is open Sundays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Erica Mantle is one of the vendors at the Columbia Farmers Market. She works at The Veggie Patch production garden.

Mantel said, "It's great to shop local and buy local."

COMO Common Grounds Community Gardens

The Office of Sustainability has community garden spaces for the public to grow their own food.

There are five community gardens:

- Britt/Hall Community Garden
- Stormy's Meadow Community Garden
- Columbia Public Schools Community Garden
- D. H. Crum Community Garden
- Unite4Health Community Garden

Columbia Parks and Recreation also rents out garden spaces at Fairview Park.

Transportation

Eric Hempel, Environmental Program Coordinator of the Office of Sustainability said public transportation is free in Columbia, so residents can still get to farmers markets and community gardens even if they don't have their own reliable form of transportation.

If residents have mobility issues, there are resources they can use as well. Alternative Community Training (ACT), OATS Inc. and Service for Independent Living are available.

Hempel isn't aware of any farmers markets or community gardens located in the areas considered a food desert.

“It would be a valuable service to the neighborhood,” Hempel said. “That’s a strategy that we could certainly look into. There could be some community partners out there that could help us bring the food to the people.”

MORE INFORMATION



Jefferson City selected for national food insecurity program

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