

Seasonal markets are back in Meriden and Wallingford

By Russell Blair

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For Meriden resident Sherry Boyd, the choice is clear: Buy local.

“We prefer to buy from farmers that grow their food around here,” she said. “Organic food is healthier and we want to support the community at the same time.”

Boyd was one of hundreds who came to the Meriden Farmers Market on Saturday morning, picking up fresh fruits and vegetables. The market returned this month to the downtown Meriden Hub site for its second year.

In addition to produce, the Meriden market offered baked goods, handmade soaps, breakfast and lunch sandwiches and freshly popped kettle corn. Al Kostuk, of Durham, fired up a propane-powered burner before dumping oil and popcorn kernels into a large black kettle.

“It’s not popcorn, it’s kettle corn,” he said. “There’s a difference.”

When the kernels began to pop, Kostuk stepped away from the kettle and stirred with a long wooden spatula. As the popping intensified he dumped in a cup of sugar, which gives the corn its sweet taste and crunchy exterior.

Since retiring as a mechanic, Kostuk has traveled around the state doing a variety of early American craft demonstrations, including blacksmithing, rope making and open-fire cooking.

Anne Marie Larese and her sister, Jennifer Speeg, co-owners of Sisters’ Kitchen, were selling cupcakes at the Meriden event.

“We grew up in Meriden so it’s nice to be here in the center and meet people from the community,” Larese said. “We meet other local vendors and we get a lot of feedback from people.”

The sisters run their business out of the kitchen at the YMCA’s Martin Gaffey Child Care Center on Crown Street, taking orders over the Internet and phone.

“This is a great way for us to interact with people,” Speeg said.

Saturday was the first day of the Wallingford Gardeners Market, which sets up downtown on the Railroad Station Green.

“We’ve had a good turnout so far. It’s been great,” said Elizabeth Landow, executive director of Wallingford Center Inc., the downtown business advocacy group that sponsors the event. “The vendors that came are doing really well and we have more coming for next week.”

Town resident Amanda Proscino set up a booth for her business, The Accessories Aesthetic, which specializes in handmade jewelry.

"It started as a hobby and it became what it is now," she said. "This is my fourth year doing the market. You meet a lot of people in the community. It's a nice social event."

Bill Parent, of Wallingford, picked through corn and squash at a stand for Farmer Joe's Gardens, a farm located at the corner of Route 68 and Leigus Road.

"We like everything," said his wife, Bernice. "I'll probably pick up some flowers and a few plants. It's all fresh and we're supporting Wallingford growers. That's why we come out." A few feet down from Farmer Joe's, Wade Elmer, another Wallingford vendor, was selling fresh-cut flowers and honey.

"It's a hobby of mine that kind of got out of control, but it pays for itself," he said. "I love to grow plants and flowers."

Elmer has been participating in the market for almost a decade.

"You get to know the other vendors after a while," he said. "I like the camaraderie of it."

The Meriden Farmers Market continues Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Meriden Hub through Oct. 20. The Wallingford Gardeners Market is held each Saturday at the Railroad Station Green from 9 a.m. to noon through Sept. 15. The Southington Farmers Market is held Fridays from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at 1003 S. Main St., Plantsville, through October.

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Photos by Russell Blair / Record-Journal



Left: Al Kostuk, of Durham, prepares kettle corn at the Meriden Farmers Market on Saturday. The market is held Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., through Oct. 20, at the downtown Meriden Hub site.
Right: Bill Parent, of Wallingford, picks through corn at a stand set up by Farmer Joe's Gardens at the Wallingford Gardeners Market on Saturday. The market is held every Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon, through Sept. 15, at the Railroad Station Green.