

Farmers Markets offer alternative

By HOPE TREMBLAY
Staff Writer

WESTFIELD – Celebrating Farmers Market Week last week was a cinch for city residents, who have three weekly markets to choose from.

On Thursdays, the Business Improvement District (BID) sponsors a market at the Church of the Atonement on Court Street, The Arbors hosts a market on Saturdays, and Zuber's on Southwick Road has a market on Sundays.

The Arbors' Farmers Market features produce from Yellow Stonehouse Farm.

Located on Root Road, Yellow Stonehouse Farm is a CSA, which is a Community Supported Agriculture farm. People can join the CSA as members and pick up shares of crops each week throughout the growing season.

Owned by husband and wife John and Connie Adams-Keilch, Yellow Stonehouse Farm brings fresh-picked vegetables, fruits and flowers to The Arbors' farmers market Saturdays from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The couple said freshness is one of the biggest reasons people should buy from Farmers Markets.

"People should be closer to their food sources," said John.

Nicholas Laizer, who works at Yellow Stonehouse Farm, said everything at the farmers market was picked either that morning, or the day before.

"I think 25 percent of what we have was freshly picked this morning," Laizer said.

For City Councilor Agma Sweeney, farmers markets are the way to go when looking for fruits and vegetables.

"I am a regular customer," said Sweeney. "There are always

fresh foods and it doesn't get any better than that."

Sweeney said since she has been buying locally at farmers markets, her children have complimented her cooking more, and all she changed was where she bought the ingredients. Sweeney praised John and his knowledge of the food they grow.

"John is really special," she said.

Connie said the couple encourages everyone to shop at any farmers market, but said the benefits of shopping at The Arbors market and at Yellow Stonehouse Farm is the food is "fresh, organic and local."

"We're organic, so we do not use pesticides, herbicides or fertilizer that is not organically certified," she said.

Laizer said another benefit to shopping at The Arbors farmers market is that the owners of the farm are there.

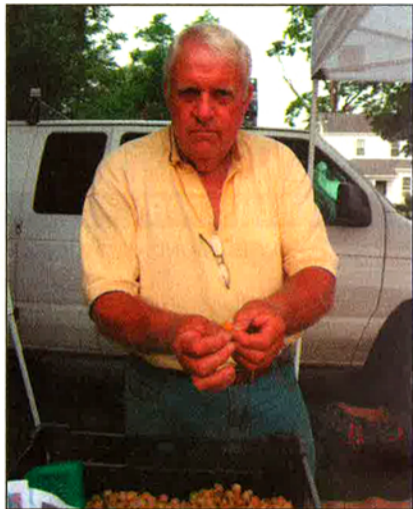
"At other markets I've been to you don't get a chance to talk to the people that run the farm," he said.

Westfield resident Peter Newman is a member of the Yellow Stonehouse Farm CSA and also shops at the farmers market. He said the fact that the farm is organic is a big draw for him.

"The food is very nutritious," he said.

In addition to food they grow on their farm, Connie and John also bring other local products to the market, including fresh bread from El Jardin Bakery in Holyoke and locally grown and made relishes.

There is a large variety of items offered at the farmers market, from heirloom tomatoes to cucumbers, husk berries to peaches and much more.



John Adams-Keilch, owner of Yellow Stonehouse Farm, displays a little-known husk berry at The Arbors Farmers Market Aug. 25. (Photo by Hope E. Tremblay)