

## **HAPI Fresh Farmers Market moves to North Hill**

**words by Zaire Talon Daniels, photos by Chris Harvey**

As summer begins for Akron residents, many have begun to emerge from their living rooms baked in the afterglow of a Netflix title screen in search of a safe and relaxing way to enjoy themselves outdoors.

Asian Services in Action, in partnership with Akron Cooperative Farms, will be hosting the HAPI Fresh Farmers Market every Wednesday until Sept. 30 at 381 Ontario Street in North Hill. The farmers market will be open from the hours of 4 pm to 7 pm and accepts cash, credit card, WIC, Senior Vouchers, and offers up to \$25 cashback for those who pay with EBT or PEBT cards.

HAPI, or Healthy Asian Pacific Islanders, is an organization sponsored by Asian Services in Action, which “encourages entrepreneurship among the Asian American and Pacific Islander {s} resettled immigrants in North Hill,” says HAPI spokesperson Emily Mattioli.

The farmers market “is a wonderful opportunity because many of the vendors and customers who attend the market live in North Hill and have identified accessibility to the market as a problem in years past,” when HAPI Fresh was located on East Market Street in Middlebury. This year, Akron Cooperative Farms has agreed to host the event at their location in order to accommodate the residents and growers of the North Hill community where much of the food is grown.

Currently, HAPI Fresh Farmers Market operates about 300 plots with 100 gardeners. HAPI’s goal is to engage primarily with the immigrant population in North Hill, yet the gardeners and vendors at the farmers market make up a diverse atmosphere of cultures, some of which include Mon, Karen, Nepali, Bhutanese, Congolese, and American communities, Mattioli says.

“Oftentimes, the gardeners working side by side share [gardening] tips, experience, and recipes among themselves. It’s a good way to learn about others in your community.”

Something unique about the HAPI Fresh Farmers Market is that much of the food being grown is from the countries of origin that the growers came from. In addition to the usual American crops such as squash and corn, shoppers will be able to invigorate their palettes with choices like pumpkin shoots, bok choy, bitter melon, and a medley of green, yellow and purple beans that may be difficult to find in stores.

HAPI Fresh Farmers Market is also committed to helping stop the spread of COVID-19 and will be enforcing measures to ensure a safe and clean atmosphere. Mattioli says, “We are strictly

adhering to COVID rules and regulations to keep everyone involved with the market safe, so we ask all of our customers to wear masks and only send one person per household to shop. Other precautions include the implementation of handwashing stations, limiting the number of shoppers at any given time, social distancing, one-way foot traffic, and checking people's temperatures prior to them coming into the market.”

*// Zaire Talon Daniels is a summer intern at The Devil Strip and a recent graduate of The University of Akron.*