

Sophia Hughes

BOONE – The Watauga County Farmers Market saw more than 1,000 customers during its opening day Saturday, April 4.

“It was an incredible Opening Day - truly one of those mornings that reminds you what this market is all about. The turnout was huge, the energy was high, and there was a real sense of joy in people being back together again. We’re so grateful to our community for showing up and supporting local farmers and makers, and we can’t wait for even more folks to be a part of it as the season unfolds.” said Michelle Dineen, the market’s director.

The 53rd season kicked off at 8:30 a.m. with Dineen, cutting the inaugural ribbon at the main entrance. She said the ribbon cutting was the first of many, as she believed it served as a great symbolic gesture to announce to the community that the producer-only market is open for the season.

“We use every square inch of our market, and it serves as an opportunity for people to meet their growers and farmers personally,” Dineen said.

The first market of the season featured 63 vendors, live music from The Burnett Sisters, and an “egg hunt” to celebrate the Easter holiday.

During the market, plastic eggs were hidden in various vendor booths, which contained “carrot coins,” a form of market currency.

“Folks have been finding prizes inside including carrot coins, vouchers for tote bags, stickers, and market merchandise,” Dineen said.

Though diverse and bustling, Dineen, as well as many vendors, expressed a deep appreciation for the feeling of closeness and community the market brings.

“You get a chance to stop and talk to people,” said market vendor Billy Joe Ward. “They call it Boone’s town square in the advertising for a reason.”

Many vendors began their day before sunrise preparing for the event. Ward began his day at 4:30 a.m. Hillbilly Joe’s Crafty Stuff offered a variety of handmade wooden items such as birdhouses, planters, and children’s toys.

Vendor Devin Lacey of Booze and Bouquets began early as well, selling flowers and talking to customers about his wedding and bartending services he offers during his time away from the market. He said that the farmers market goal aligned with the interests of community members: affordable and natural products.

“We do trade here, and this is a representation of working people in the county,” said Lacey.

“There’s no way better to support your local farmers than to come out here directly, you can get away from all the sprays and nastiness as people here grow more naturally.”

Seasonal vegetables could be found throughout the market, including mushrooms, potatoes, cauliflower and microgreens. Hot food was offered near the entrance and exit to the market, and coffee was available near the center. There were also two food trucks on site, Valencia Flavors and Poncho Y Jefe.

Dineen encouraged shoppers to join the Market Bunch loyalty program, which allows returning shoppers to earn perks and prizes for their attendance throughout the season. Customers can receive bumper stickers, lanyards, and tote bags based on usage of their loyalty punch card.

The market is open every Saturday from April through November from 8 a.m to noon. For more information, visit <https://www.wataugacountyfarmersmarket.org/>.

3 photos below:





