Independence Farmers Market
2018 Year in Review

Opening Day
We had a successful (and cold!) opening day for the 2018 Independence Farmers Market. 19 vendors made an appearance along with a dozen Ambassadors for the ribbon cutting on May 12, 2018.

Vendors
We had a record number of registered vendors this year – 60 – and 21 vendors were new to the market. 32 vendors sold fresh fruits/vegetables, baked goods, jam/jellies, eggs, honey, and pork. 28 vendors sold handmade craft items. There was an average of 21 vendors per market. August 18th was a record number for vendor attendance for the year with 29 vendors. We also had three nonprofit vendors who set up booths throughout the season.

Event Days
• Kid’s Day: The guest chef, Independence Public Library Teens, served almost 70 people their delicious, fresh salad with homemade dressings, and the Master Gardener craft reached just over 40 kids. Tracey, with Make It Up! Face painting, was a great addition to the event this year.
• Dog Day: This day consisted of Pet Photos by Wilson Photography and proceeds went to the Indee Bark Park. Otter Creek animal shelter was also there with promotional items.
• Community Organization Day: Four community service organizations set up tables to help spread the word about their efforts and recruit members.
• Wellness Fair: August 11 was the annual Wellness Fair, where eight organizations and businesses provided very helpful information to keep our community happy and healthy!
• Soup Feed: The first fundraiser day for the Historical Society raised $225! Vendors made soups and desserts for the occasion.
• Chili Cook-off: The second fundraiser of the year was held at River’sEDGE due to flooding – a big thank you to Independence Parks and Rec for the use of the space! There was a decent turn out – almost 50 people casted their vote for their favorite chili. Vendors donated soup, cornbread, and desserts. The winner was a white chicken chili made by 9-year-old, Avah Julip! It was also Public Power Week, so Independence Light and Power brought their bucket truck to give free rides to the public along with lots of freebies! It is always a customer favorite!

Photo credits given to the Independence Bulletin Journal and Sarah Kielly.
Guest Chefs and Taste Tests
The market had several Guest Chefs this year! Nora Kurtovic and Andria Anderson provided market go-ers with samples of 3-can chili and a corn and chili salad. Joe Olsen and John Hougen were kind enough to cook up samples of breakfast links, stir-fry, and brats using market vendor, Krogmann Heritage Meats, pork. The Buchanan County Master Gardeners also provided a taste test of heirloom tomatoes from their gardens. All was a great success and we appreciate the community’s support!

Junior Farmers Market
The 3rd Annual Junior Farmers Market was held August 1 from 5-7 pm at the Independence Public Library lawn. The purpose of the event is to encourage creativity, entrepreneurship, and interpersonal skills for the youth throughout the county. There were nine vendors, whose ages ranged from six to 13 years old, and sold items ranging from baked goods, vegetables, earrings, and hand painted signs. All had great sales and a lot of fun! About 70 people attended. The Bulletin Journal and the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Courier did stories on the event. Keep an eye out for next year’s event!

Farmers Market Produce Donation Program
Last year, vendors with produce were requesting an outlet for their excess produce besides the compost bin. So, Market Manager, Sarah Kielly, and Ashley Sherrets, Buchanan County Master Gardener Program Coordinator, teamed up to apply for and be awarded the 2018 SNAP-Ed Food Security Master Gardener Mini-Grant; a total of $90,000 was spread over the state to support food access projects. With the funds, the Farmers Market Produce Donation Program was started. Vendors were able to donate excess produce at the end of each market day and Master Gardener volunteers would weigh and transport it to the Independence Area Food Pantry. The vendors ended up donating almost 800 pounds of fresh, local produce this season! We are looking forward to surpassing that number next year!
Board Update
The Independence Farmers Market Association Board is working on obtaining tax-exempt 501(c)3 status! The spring Board/member meeting was held in April and another meeting is scheduled for this fall to elect new Board members and celebrate the successful season! If interested in serving on the Board, please contact Market Manager, Sarah Kielly.

Musicians
This year, two musicians dedicated time to perform at the market. The market vendors and customers would like to thank Michael Murphy from Waterloo and Mark Armstrong from Waukon for their performances. We appreciate their support and music to help bring a welcoming and entertaining atmosphere to the market.

Marketing
Several marketing strategies were utilized this year to help promote the market to new customers and vendors.

- Website: A new webpage on the Buchanan County ISU Extension and Outreach’s website was set up at the beginning of this season. This is a great place for vendors and eaters to look for resources and information. Also new this year is an interactive map of where the vendors of the market are located throughout Buchanan and surrounding counties.
- Facebook: Use of social media played a vital role in the market’s success and popularity again this year. We utilized our Facebook page to promote events, keep people up-to-date on what was available at the market, and promote community businesses and organizations. At the beginning of January 2018 there were 1,341 likes on the page and to date there are 1,475 likes. Our Opening Day event reached over 9,200 people! Please keep sharing and liking the posts and pictures!
- Independence Bulletin Journal: Again, this year, John Klotzbach of the Bulletin Journal dedicated his Saturday mornings to taking pictures at the market and visiting with the customers and vendors. Almost every week there was a great article and photo display in the newspaper. We really appreciate John’s support! Also, thanks to the Bulletin Journal for their promotion of buying local year round!

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• Farmers Market Bucks: These coupons were created as a way for business and organization to give out as a gift certificate of sorts. When a customer uses the coupons, the vendor brings them to the Market Manager for reimbursement from the Farmers Market account. A couple local organizations utilized them this year.
• Presentations: Sarah Kielly, Market Manager, gave a presentation to the Independence chapter of the Rotary Club.
• Reusable Bag Fundraiser: As a way to raise money and promote the market, reusable bags (that scrunch up into a handy pouch!) were given away for a free-will donation. There are still plenty of bags left for sale!

Holiday Farmers Market

The 3rd Annual Holiday Farmers Market was held in December 2017 during Jingle On Main. The market was located at Living Water Church in downtown Independence. There was a great turnout of vendors, 14 in all, who sold anything from honey, to baked goods, to stained glass. Great acoustic guitar music was provided by Brian Elzey of BEmusic. The 4th Annual Holiday Farmers Market is being planned at the same location during Jingle on Main for November 30, 2018, so bring your holiday shopping list!

Improvements for 2019 Season

Vendors have expressed that they would like a cohesive look, so new market t-shirts and hats are planned for next season. The A-frame signs that get put out during the week that advertise the market are becoming worn and torn; funding opportunities are being scouted to replace them and to add additional signs to help cover all avenues coming into town.

Last, But Not Least...THANK YOU!

The market would not have such success without our consistent and supportive customers! You make the market what it is and help support the small businesses and farmers within our community and county!

Contact Information

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Independence Farmers Market
100 1st Street West
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Times of Operation: Mid-May thru mid-Oct.
Saturdays, 8 am – 12 pm

Photo credits given to the Independence Area Chamber of Commerce and Sarah Kielly.