

Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market

2017 Final Report



Introduction

The Rosebud Reservation is classified as a food desert, meaning at least 33% of of Rosebud residents live more than ten miles from the closest grocery store¹ and lack access to fresh food. The Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market, located outside of the Turtle Creek Crossing grocery store in Mission, is an attempt to address the food inequality that tribal members experience.

Managed by the REDCO Community Food Sovereignty Initiative (CFSI), the Market has been in operation for three seasons. The following is a final report summarizing the 2017 Market season.

¹ <http://bit.ly/1ii8VEn>

2017 Overview

The Keya Wakpala Farmers' Market was held every Wednesday from August 2-October 11, 2017, and was located in front of the CFSI office next to Turtle Creek Crossing grocery store. This past season was particularly exciting for a variety of reasons: we had the largest number of vendors, community members are recognizing the Market is a program that is here to stay, and increased staff capacity led to better advertising and record keeping than in previous years.

In 2017, the CFSI had two full-time AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers, who assisted with the operations of the Market each week: advertising, recruiting and managing vendors, setting up and tearing down the Market, and keeping inventory and financial record keeping. In addition to the VISTA's, the CFSI had intern Leahanna Kheeler, who created spreadsheets to keep track of inventory and sales data and assisted with the set-up of the Market.

Our advertising approach centered around social media outreach and hanging flyers in Mission and Rosebud. Since Facebook is the primary form of communication on Rosebud, the CFSI regularly published posts advertising for the Market and gave live updates about products available each week. Fliers featured produce grown in the Keya Wakpala Community Garden, advertised the Markets' ability to accept SNAP/EBT, and were hung up in busy venues such as the post office and coffee shop in Mission, and All-Stop and the Diabetes Prevention Program in Rosebud. The increased advertising had visible effects: posts published on Facebook were often seen by hundreds of people, and the fliers around town led to at least three vendors selling at the Market.

Another positive development from increased staff capacity led to the creation of spreadsheets to track both inventory of the Market and sales data. We were able to better record amount of vegetables sold and revenue generated, important points of data as we plan next year's garden and Market. These spreadsheets were created by intern Leahanna Kheeler, and helped with the overall organization of the Market this season.



In conjunction with increased advertising was the development and implementation of programming at the Market. We envision the Market becoming a family-friendly, community gathering space, and are still in the learning process as to what types of events and programs work best.

This past season, Master Gardener Donna Adrian and SDSU Extension Rosebud hosted two canning presentations at the Market. While canning produce is a logical skill to learn at a farmers' market, these events were not as successful as we had hoped. Since the Market is held outside and lacks access to a kitchen, these presentations did not allow for attendees to actually can vegetables. Instead, Ms. Adrian gave a lecture on the process of canning and gave handouts which contained instructions. Additionally, advertising for these specific events could have been improved to encourage more people to attend.

Our most successful program this past season was a petting zoo held in September. One of the Market vendors brought ponies, goats, rabbits and chickens from his farm for kids to be able to pet and feed. The Boys & Girls Club arranged for all of their kids to come see the animals, and the zoo itself attracted a lot of attention and brought a wide variety of customers to the Market. The week that we held the petting zoo is the same week that the Market recorded its highest earnings of the season.

2017 marked the first full season that we were able to accept both SNAP/EBT and credit/debit cards, making it easier for community members to purchase produce. Another aspect of the card reader was allowing the CFSI to accept credit/debit transactions for other vendors: another vendor would sell \$10 worth of product, the CFSI would swipe a card for that amount and process the payment, and then would write a check for \$10 to give to the vendor. This capability allowed all of the market vendors to sell more products overall.

As mentioned above, the CFSI was able to create tracking systems for the Market this season. While we did a better job of tracking information, there are still some gaps in our records. The table below illustrates how many pounds of produce we sold each week. It should be noted that we kept track of pounds sold for six of the eleven markets held; this table reflects only the weeks for which we have this information.

| Date | Pounds of Produce Sold |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| August 2 nd | 28.04 lbs |
| August 9 th | 38.46 lbs. |
| August 16 th | 36.89 lbs. |
| August 23 rd | 21.54 lbs. |
| August 30 th | 19.55 lbs. |
| September 6 th | 60.00 lbs. |
| Total | 204.48 lbs. |

Of all the produce sold, there are some vegetables which stood out for their popularity. Over the course of the season, we sold more than 30 pounds of carrots, cabbage, cucumbers, green beans and tomatoes. Some of these vegetables we knew were going to be popular based off of sales in previous market seasons. Other vegetables, such as the green beans, had high sales because they are easy to can. While we will use this information to help plan next year's garden, it should also be noted that other vegetables, such as hot peppers and onions, were also popular but were not grown in as large quantities as the ones listed above.

Related to the amount of produce sold is the revenue we were able to generate. We hope that the Market will be able to sustain the operating costs of itself and the Keya Wakpala Community Garden, and will become a viable economic opportunity for local growers and artisans. Over the 2017 season, the Farmers' Market generated at least \$950.75 in revenue, averaging \$95.08 each week. Below is a table detailing earnings made each Market. Please note: revenue is missing from the week of October 4, 2017. CFSI staff was out of town that week, and the Market was held by volunteers who were not instructed to keep track of inventory sold or revenue made.

| Date | Total Revenue |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| August 2 nd | \$81.00 |
| August 9 th | \$76.00 |
| August 16 th | \$187.75 |
| August 23 rd | \$71.50 |
| August 30 th | \$33.50 |
| September 6 th | \$108.00 |
| September 13 th | \$84.75 |
| September 20 th | \$107.25 |
| September 27 th | \$165.75 |
| October 11 th | \$35.25 |
| Total Revenue | \$950.75 |

We did not set any sort of revenue goal for 2017. However, we will need to increase earnings if we want the Market to help sustain operating costs of the garden. Increased profit could come

from raising produce prices, operating the Market more than once a week, or selling value-added products at the Market.

Vendors

The 2017 season saw the most amount of vendors ever. Some returned from previous seasons, but we had about five new vendors this past summer. One of the AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers was responsible for recruiting and communicating with vendors, which helped with advertising which vendors would be present at the Market.



There was a wide variety of products offered throughout the season: local vegetables, grass-fed beef, soaps, lotions, bakery, pottery, local eggs, hand-crafted jewelry and home-baked bread were all available during at least one Market.

The CFSI booth was set-up at every Market. While no other vendor was present every week, there were about five other sellers who showed up for about half of the Markets, ensuring that there was always at

least two vendors at each week.

Returning vendors were the CFSI, the Sweat Shop (bakery), Dakota Soaps (soaps and lotions), Christine Sully (handmade skirts), and Margaret O'Connor (eggs and pottery). 2017 did mark the presence of new vendors, including Scott Tennet (vegetables), Alex Romero-Frederick (grass-fed beef), Jack Reid (home-baked bread), Mr. Tennet (Nebraska corn), and two Navajo artists who were traveling through Rosebud and stopped to sell at the Market one week. The presence of new vendors, especially local ones, was an exciting development this past season and is something we hope to capitalize on in upcoming summers.

Overall, we had a diverse group of vendors over the course of the 2017 season. As the Market continues to grow, we hope we can encourage more local and Native vendors to sell their products. Recruiting and maintaining vendors has always been a challenge for us, but is something we feel we can even better next year.

Challenges

The 2017 season provided some great learning opportunities for the CFSI. As we plan for future seasons, we will be able to use this past summer to find ways to improve the Market and how we can better serve our community.

One of the first challenges we encountered was deciding on a day and time that would work best for shoppers. Markets were held on Fridays in previous seasons, with mixed results. People often leave on the weekends during the summer, so we decided to hold the Market in the middle of the week to see if more people would be shopping. While we had a relatively steady stream of shoppers, it is possible that a different day of the week would reach more people.

Related to the day of the Market is the time and location of it. We held the Market from 4:30-6:30PM this past season to maximize reaching the number of people who go shopping after work. For the most part, this time seemed to be ideal for holding the Market, though we did receive some feedback that it should be held later, from 5:00-7:00PM, to reach more shoppers. We recognize that no time will work best for everyone, though we do believe that a late afternoon Market during the week is the best option for us.

Since its inception, the Market's location has been in front of Turtle Creek Crossing grocery store. This is partly due to the proximity to the KWCG, but also because REDCO envisions the Turtle Creek Crossing grocery store and garden becoming the focal point of local foods as the Keya Wakpala Green Development is built, making it a logical place for the Farmers' Market. This past season, we were able to host the Market right outside of the CFSI office, making it easy to grab necessary items, make change or restock. However, holding the Market in front of Turtle Creek does mean that we may get less traffic, due to its location outside of Mission. Shoppers either have to know about the Market, or happen to come to Turtle Creek on Market day. Better and increased advertising--through Facebook, fliers, radio spots and announcements in the Todd County Tribune--could all help increase foot traffic.



In conjunction with advertising for the Market is recruiting and communication with vendors. As mentioned above, we had the largest number of vendors to date, but we would like to see the number of people selling regularly increase. On top of that, the Market is meant to be a good economic opportunity for community members, and so we would like to focus on recruiting more Native vendors for the next season. With our vendors this past summer, communication proved to be a challenge. We often were not sure which vendors would be showing up to the Market, making advertising difficult. In order for the Market to be as successful as possible, we would like to create a culture of consistency and stability and have vendors show up on a regular basis so that our community members know what to expect each week. However, we are still unsure of how to hold our vendors more accountable for their attendance.

2017 was the first full season that we were able to accept SNAP/EBT, an exciting development that we hope will allow us to reach community members who need healthy food the most. Though we advertised our capability to accept SNAP/EBT, we did not swipe a single SNAP card over the summer. This may have stemmed from people still not knowing they could use SNAP/EBT at the Market. And, as in many other places, there is a culture of unhealthy eating. People are accustomed to eating processed foods that often don't require much cooking. Fresh vegetables are not commonly consumed, and some community members may lack the means to cook, making them less likely to purchase fresh foods. Utilizing the SNAP/EBT capability to the fullest extent possible is a goal for the CFSI next year.

One of the challenges we faced each week was pricing our produce. There is a balance between making produce affordable for our community members, while also ensuring the Market is generating enough revenue to help make itself and the garden more financially stable. Generally speaking, we kept our prices very low over the course of the season. However, if we do want to make the Market more of a revenue generator, we will have to raise prices, hold more Markets or find other avenues of revenue generation for the CFSI program.

As mentioned above, spreadsheets that track pounds of produce sold and revenue made were created for the Market. But, also noted earlier in this report, record keeping was not constant throughout all eleven weeks. There was not one CFSI staff member responsible for maintaining the spreadsheets; the person filling them out varied over the course of the Market season.



Another factor was ambiguity as to how we should record the inventory. In the beginning of the season, we were tracking pounds brought and then sold. Towards the end, we kept track of amount brought and sold (i.e., 12 bunches of carrots were brought to the Market and then 9 bunches were sold). This lack of organization of record keeping led to an incomplete picture of our overall Market season, and is something we will address next summer.

Finally, perhaps the biggest challenge is the lack of certification and licensing. As the Market grows and we bring on more vendors, this is an important gap we will have to address.

A voluntary certification is Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), a program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service to verify that farms are utilizing good handling and packaging practices. Having this certification ensures that the CFSI is selling safe produce to our community members, and would also allow us to sell produce to Turtle Creek Crossing grocery store or other retailers. This certification process would assist both the Market and the garden to expand their impact in Rosebud.

The state of South Dakota has certain requirements regarding Farmers' Markets and selling goods. State law mandates that every vendor have a sales tax license and collect a sales tax of 4.5% to be paid at the end of each month. However, none of the vendors--including the CFSI--did this. Other regulations concern using a certified scale to sell goods sold by weight, food sampling practices, and rules for selling eggs, meat and home-baked goods. Obtaining all of these types of certifications and licenses will take time, but we recognize that steps must be taken for the CFSI to understand these regulations so that we can assist our vendors in getting their own certifications and licenses.

Finally, South Dakota has a short growing season, which led to a short Market season. Even though we began planting in the KWCG in April, the first Market was held in August. Having a longer Market season would give us the opportunity to reach more community members and to make more revenue.

We know that addressing all of these challenges will be a team effort. However, as a program that is constantly learning and adapting, we are confident that overcoming these will allow us to create a Farmers' Market that will become a friendly, positive community gathering space.

Recommendations

After analyzing the 2017 Keya Wakpala Farmers Market, we have created some recommendations to overcome our challenges and improve upon our success and momentum for 2018.

The CFSI hopes to increase the length of the Market season in 2018. This will be possible due to the construction of the greenhouse and high tunnel in the KWCG. Because of these new structures, the CFSI will be able to plant earlier and continue growing later in the season. The extended growing season will translate into more opportunities for us to advertise and host the Market.

Hosting more Markets is an exciting development, but will require better organization on the CFSI's behalf. This will include: developing a standard tracking system for both inventory and sales, assigning one staff member to manage and update these systems, creating a marketing strategy which includes social media, radio and fliers, and programming planning.

Part of the marketing strategy should include developing a partnership with both the SNAP office and the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP). We did not utilize our SNAP capabilities over the summer, something we would like to see changed in 2018. Having a good relationship with the SNAP office, having them tell their clients that our Market is an option, would assist us in reaching that particular demographic. The Diabetes Prevention Program is another logical partner for us. Exercise alone does not minimize the risk of contracting diabetes, or controlling the disease. A healthy diet is essential for people who are at risk or already have diabetes. Community members who go to the Diabetes Prevention Program are already taking steps to

improve their health through exercise, our Market provides the opportunity for people to buy fresh, nutritious foods. Working with the DPP to ensure that people who go there know about our Market would increase our reach and impact.

Another recommendation is to develop a programming calendar in the beginning of the season. It can be difficult for people or groups to commit to an event months in advance, but would help CFSI staff advertise. Options for programming include hosting a movie night, sampling food, or another petting zoo. Having a calendar of events would allow the CFSI to better prepare for them and ensure that adequate staff is present.

Also needed at the Market is a policy procedure handbook, outlining general rules and clarifying expectations for our vendors. This handbook will cover Market times and days, explain regulations around selling products and cover policy surrounding conduct. The CFSI did create a Welcome Packet for vendors this past summer, but it was never finalized or given to our vendors.

It is also recommended that the CFSI obtains a sales tax license for 2018. This is something required by South Dakota law, and should be mandatory for all other vendors at the Market. The CFSI, as the managing program of the Market, should be the first to get a license so that we can learn how the process works and be able to assist other vendors in future seasons.

Lastly, we recognize that lack of transportation is a big issue in Rosebud. Many people who live in the more rural, outlying communities do not have reliable access to a car, and struggle to get to Mission. We know that by holding the Market in Mission, we are not reaching a lot of community members who a) might want to shop at the Market; and b) are some of the people who need access to fresh food the most. The CFSI has discussed the possibility of mobilizing the Market so that we may reach more people. With the anticipated increase in production from our garden in 2018, next summer could be a good test run to see if a mobile market is feasible. Recommendations for this upcoming season are to host the Market in at least two other communities: Parmelee (to reach He Dog and Upper Cut Meat), and St. Francis (also would reach Spring Creek and Grass Mountain communities). Depending on the success of these satellite markets, we could either continue going there in future years or explore other possibilities on best ways to increase our impact in these communities.



Recognition and Thanks

The CFSI would like to thank our parent company, REDCO for their support.

Of course, we would like to extend a huge thanks to our vendors, without whom the Market would not be as successful: Emilio Gomez (traveling Navajo artist), Kim Moran (Dakota Soaps), Margaret O'Connor, Alex Romero-Frederick, Jack Reid, Marilyn Strait (The Sweat Shop), Christine Sully and Scott Tennet.

Lots of appreciation goes to Leahanna Kheeler, our full-time intern who regularly assisted with the Market.

And, finally, to our the full-time staff of the CFSI: Rachel Kent, Aaron Mandell, Emily McDermott and Michael Prate, Jr.