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Published April 5th, 2017

Farmers Market Celebrates 20th Anniversary

By Sora O'Doherty



Twins Sadie and Morgan took their father David to the Opening Day of the market after a morning playing Tot Baseball across the street at the Orinda Community Park. Photo Andy Scheck

It was no April Fool's Joke when the Orinda Farmers market cut the ribbon on its 20th season of providing fresh food on April 1. The Farmers Market will run until mid-November, with a focus on food and music from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays in front of the Rite Aide store on Orinda Way.

The market's goals for 2016 were to increase customer attendance and offer some new attractions. According to Staci DeShasier, executive director of Contra Costa County Farmers' Markets, Orinda accomplished that goal with a 10 percent increase in customer attendance. DeShasier was delighted, noting that the increase translates into real dollars for small family farms and also means more residents and visitors are discovering the market and enjoying its offerings.

Enabled by the Orinda Community Center's donation of chairs, the market was able to expand its customer seating area. DeShasier says that when they added top musicians in front of the new seating, it made the

market the place to be on Saturday mornings, and now the market has a full lineup of music on tap.

As a nonprofit, part of the market's mission is educating people about the benefits of healthy eating. This year the focus is on families. There will be a children's activity every week at the kids' booth, which will be staffed by the market, but also by local community group volunteers. Activities will be based on the seasons, such as strawberry season, cherry season, and will also focus on obscure holidays like National Herb Day.

Michael Faircloth won't be returning to the farmers' market, having this year opened La Chtaigne bakery in Lafayette. The Bake Shop will be the new market bakery, and DeShasier raves about their wonderful bagels and unusual smears, new breakfast sandwiches with eggs from Great Valley Poultry and amazing Mexican pastries. Other newcomers to the market include: Smit Ranch, provider of organic apples, preserves, honey and nuts; Michie's Munchies which will sell wheat free (not gluten free) bakery products and Anna's seafood selling fresh seafood.

DeShasier noted that the market has been an incubator for businesses, such as Donna Pickthall, who opened Genuine Goodness just down the street. The restaurant this year will be open on Saturday mornings, offering a modified, simpler menu featuring farmer's market produce in signature dishes.

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

back

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