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## Connie Lemley: Local farmers provide food for FIS' Love Local Lunch

By Connie Lemley Guest columnist  
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This past Tuesday was the farmers market’s annual meeting where market producers came together to share updates, elect board members, approve our annual budget, and get ready for a new season. A couple years ago, we put together a market timeline stretching all the way back

to 1989 when the Bridgeport Ruritan Club coordinated the market on Saturday mornings from 8-11 a.m. in front of the Old Capitol. A few highlights from the timeline include:

- In 2000, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture created KY Proud and started coordinating markets. Our market was the 69th entity in the state to register as KY Proud.
- May 3, 2004, was the ribbon cutting for our current market pavilion at River View Park. Lee Ann Jones, our current market board president, was instrumental in building the pavilion.
- In 2009, our market was one of the first in the state to start accepting credit cards and SNAP/EBT. Long-time customer Larry Moore coordinated that program during its inaugural year.

Over the years, even as local farmers feeding their neighbors has remained at the core of what we do, our market has grown to offer music, cooking demonstrations, Kids Days, and a wide range of food access programs. In keeping with our mission of rooting community and economic health in local harvests, we continue to build partnerships to connect everyone in our community with fresh food while growing our local agricultural economy.

In 2019, as part of the Local Foods, Local Places community conversation hosted by the City of Frankfort, many people talked about a need for more school gardens and more local foods to be served in school meals. Ever since then, the Friends of the Franklin County Farmers Market have been working with Frankfort Independent Schools to try and make that a reality for our kids.

It is easier to dream something than to make it happen, but we saw real progress in our farm to school work in 2023. We grew microgreens in the basement at Second Street School and harvested thyme from the FHS garden and sweet potatoes from the Jane Julian Farm to include in the South Frankfort Food Share. We included almost 13,000 servings of local veggies in our summer meal distribution. We also served local foods in school lunches almost every week from August through mid-December and tripled the district's local food purchasing to over \$10,000 in 2023.



Connie Lemley

Of course, we remain hungry to do more, but next week we are taking a moment to celebrate with a Love Local Lunch at Second Street School on Wednesday and at Frankfort High School on Thursday. The meal is free to all students, just as breakfast and lunch always are at FIS. We are celebrating local farmers, community partners, and the work of feeding each other and are very excited about the menu which includes:

- Sirloin steak from Our Home Place Meat, a project of the Berry Center, in Henry County. Keenan Bishop, Franklin County extension agent, and Nat Colten, with KSU, are grilling our steaks with the help of the Franklin County Cattlemen's Association.
- Baked potatoes from Happy Jack's Farm here in Franklin County.
- Thyme roasted carrots from Salad Days Farm in Woodford County with dried thyme from the FHS garden. Second Street School students cooked and taste tested this dish during fall 2023 PEP Week.
- Butternut squash cornbread made by FoodChain in Lexington with butternut squash grown by FIS students at the Jane Julian Farm and cornmeal from Happy Jack's Farm.
- Salad with pea shoots and microgreens grown by SSS Garden Club, onions from Cedar Ring Greens in Franklin County and radishes from High Five Farm in Woodford County.

Our community partners who helped make this meal possible include the USDA, KY Department of Agriculture, Inside Out Design, Kentucky State University, Franklin County Cooperative Extension, Yes Arts, KY Native Plant Society, Capital Area Extension Master Gardeners, BrokenFork Design, the Jane Julian Farm, and FoodChain.

We also want to honor the FIS food service staff who make this meal and so much of our work over the past three years possible. They go above and beyond to feed our kids and work to make meals more nourishing and appealing even when that is the harder path. Want to learn more

about all these community partnerships and FIS's farm to school work? Just visit [fcmarket.org/blog](https://www.fcmarket.org/blog).

We have a winter farmers market today from 10-11:30 a.m. at the market pavilion. You will be able to visit with several of the farmers mentioned above, shop for local veggies, baked goods, meats, preserves, body care products and much more including a wide range of lovely gifts for Valentine's Day. The weather forecast is looking lovely so come on out and bask in the sun and the warmth of our market community.

*Connie Lemley is executive director of the Franklin County Farmers Market and Farm-to-School coordinator for Frankfort Independent Schools. She can be reached at [vista@franklincountyfarmersmarket.org](mailto:vista@franklincountyfarmersmarket.org).*