

Shoppers pile in for pre-sale

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Monday, May 5, 2014 4:00 pm

The Beloit Farmer's Market pre-sale on Saturday featured happy shoppers and vendors thanks to sunshine and a bountiful harvest.

"The weather is sunny. It's a little windy, but it's manageable," said Downtown Beloit Association Program Coordinator Crystal Buhmeyer.

The event kicked off Saturday from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. filling up the 300 block of State Street in downtown Beloit with 28 vendors. The pre-sale included early season produce, plants and flowers, baked goods, salsa, honey, seafood, herbs, homemade specialty soaps and much more.

The full Beloit Farmers Market will start the first Saturday in June and run until the last Saturday of October offering a variety of goods in downtown Beloit. It will feature 85 to 95 vendors weekly as well as a food court. Buhmeyer said this year's lineup will be more diverse than ever, with new food vendors selling everything from Jamaican Jerk Chicken to Puerto Rican shish kabobs.

Although the pre-sale was only a fraction of the size of the regular market, it still attracted plenty of fans eager for spring.

Shirley DiFrancesco of Beloit said she was cheering up Chippy, her Yorkie dog, by taking him to one of his favorite spots, the Beloit Farmers Market. Chippy had 10 teeth pulled the previous day and DiFrancesco said he had been feeling down.

DiFrancesco said she loves coming to the market to taste the food, buy something pretty for her yard and to meet nice people. With a pup in toe, there are always new friends to be made.

"It takes two hours with Chippy. Everyone's got to stop and pet him," she said.

Many vendors were glad to reconnect with their customer friends and start training the next generation for their market duties.

Double D's B's honey, essential oils and soaps was back in full effect with Terri and Dan Dodge as well as their daughter, Stacie Ahlgren, and grandchildren, Sara and Sam Clark. This year the kids were more involved than ever.

Sara had starting working to save up for a floating book nook she was going to make out of rope, a dog bed and a trampoline. She had even used spreadsheets to estimate her profits, going as far as to prepare for three possible rain-out scenarios.

While Sara was counting her brother Sam, who made up the snakebite soap, was chatting it up with

customers.

“He can talk bee,” Terri Dodge said. “And he never seems to tire.”

There were also some new vendors this year like Brenda Peterson of Brenda’s Backyard who was selling with veteran vendor Darrel George of Carousel Acres. Peterson said her love of growing and garden art had started out as a hobby. After a Rockford garden center she worked at closed down, she decided to go into business for herself.

At Saturday’s pre-sale event Peterson said was excited about the opportunity to sell in Beloit. She noted that the other vendors had been friendly and introduced themselves.

“I think it looks very promising. It’s been an eclectic mix of young, old, men, women and college kids. I like that,” she said.

Peterson said she also liked the idea of dogs being allowed at the event, unlike at some other farmers markets.

“For me, pets are part of the family,” Peterson said.

George said Beloit has been his best market money wise.

“I get a lot of people here. The people who run it do a great job, especially Crystal Buhmeyer,” George said.

Doug Smith selling for Brown Deer Farms two miles west of Beloit, was at the market for the first time selling maple syrup. He said he liked the market because it was close to home.