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## DBA Indoor Winter Beloit Farmers' Market provides new opportunities

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer  
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Terri Stout's Midwest Gourmet Garlic is one of the vendors at the Downtown Beloit Association's (DBA) Indoor summer harvest of garlic will keep until February, or March and her dips can be sold year round.

Hillary Gavan



BELOIT — Everyone's invited to the Downtown Beloit Association's (DBA) Indoor Winter Farmers' Market. The event kicked off on Nov. 7 at the DBA's new offices at 557 E. Grand Ave. The indoor markets are Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon.

Due to COVID-19, DBA Promotions Coordinator Crystal Cribbs said the indoor market is limited to 17 vendors and 25 shoppers at one time. Despite restrictions, a steady flow has attended including 171 people the first week, 135 the second week; and 134 the third week.

The indoor market will run the first Saturday in November to the last Saturday in April while the traditional Beloit Farmers' Market will run the first Saturday in May until the last Saturday in October.

At the Indoor Winter Farmers' Market, most of the vendors accept debit cards, and people can purchase through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Some of the items featured at the Indoor Winter Farmers' Market have included tea, beef, mushrooms, tamales, elk meat, beef jerky sticks, honey, dips, baked goods, homemade pasta, seafood, soap, apples and apple ciders, spices, dog treats and more.

The market has been a great opportunity for Lora Cawkins and her daughter Madeline Cawkins of The Wright Way Farm of Beloit who were selling tomatoes, microgreens, fresh-ground whole wheat flour and canned goods at a Nov. 28 market.

"We love it," Lora Cawkins said.

The Cawkinses explained how they had picked their tomatoes green which have been ripening, allowing them to sell tomatoes until December. They also had turnips and radishes, dilly beans and pickled cherry tomatoes.

The added selling time was a great help after they struggled during the pandemic due to the market being temporarily closed in the beginning of the selling season and a later glass jar shortage.

“All the jars were gone and by the time we got them, the product was gone,” Lora Cawkins said.

The market also was a boost for Terri Stout, owner of Midwest Gourmet Garlic and Midwest Mixes. With her garlic keeping fresh until February or March and lots of spices on hand, the indoor market was a great place to sell her wares. It also gave her the opportunity to tout her new fundraising program where people can sell her products and keep a portion of the proceeds for charity.

Sam Meyers and Mike Wallin of All Natural Artisan Smoked Beef Jerky out of Rockford were selling their dried meats. Wallin, the owner, said he actually had a strong season as he had sold at Kauffman’s Country Store Market on Highway 81 this summer. The Kauffman’s market took many vendors displaced by size restrictions at the Beloit Farmers’ Market. Having the winter market in Beloit would be an added opportunity to sell and provide more of his products.

Although people couldn’t eat at the indoor market, Maria Guzman and her son Blas Guzman of Coco’s Tamales were selling individually-packaged hot tamales which were cooked in the morning and kept warm in a cooler. People were welcome to purchase the warm tamales for eating at home later. The Guzman’s also were selling hand-sewn face masks.

Cribbs said conversations about a winter market stem back to 2012. After the summer market ends the last weekend in October, she said there are shelf-stable products and baked goods still available as well as meats and cheeses which are produced year round.

“We wanted to continue to bring the community the products it loves,” Cribbs said. “It gives a lot of our vendors the opportunity to sell and have extra income to sustain themselves through the pandemic.”

However, the DBA was limited by space at its former locations including 500 Public Ave., the Eclipse Center and in the Strong Building. Once the former Beloit Sports Center became available, the DBA finally had the room it required for the indoor market. Its next curveball was COVID-19, but with masking and social distancing as well as limited vendors and shoppers, plans for the market moved ahead.

Cribbs explained that each Friday the Beloit Farmers Market Facebook page shares which vendors will be on site. By allowing people to “tag” the vendor, the sellers will hopefully get more ample followings on their social media sites.

Cribbs said most of the customers are familiar faces who were attendees of the regular market.

“You see them week after week, so that is great,” she said.

Hopefully, when the pandemic has passed someday, Cribbs said there can be more vendors included.

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