

Business is brisk at Sheridan's Farmers' Market



Above, Vilma Sharpksi of Sheridan checks out the vegetables at the Sheridan College and University of Wyoming organic produce stand at the Sheridan Farmer's Market at Whitney Commons on Thursday. "I recommend everyone come," said Sharpksi after purchasing plums, potatoes and cucumbers from the stand, while at left, Kallie Nivens, 7, of Sheridan checks out a table of wood-rose roses crafted from bamboo bark while walking through the Sheridan Farmers Market in Whitney Commons with her mother Mary Nivens (second from left) and brother Brenden on Thursday. The market will be open 4-7 p.m. every Thursday through Sept. 13.

The Sheridan Press
Michael Sullivan

Move to Whitney Commons applauded by vendors, shoppers at weekly event

By Pat Blair

Special contributor to The Press

Kris McCready of Sheridan had stopped by Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library on Thursday afternoon to drop off a book. Then she saw the tents across the street in Whitney Commons.

"I got curious," she said. She found Sheridan's weekly Farmers' Market in full swing, a dozen or more vendors selling everything from herbs and salad fixins' to sausage and breads to hand-made quilts, blankets and jewelry. While adults shopped, youngsters played in the "water features" or sat for hand- and face-painting. It was McCready's first time to visit the Farmers' Market, which is every Thursday from 4-7 p.m.

"I got some cucumbers, and I'm going for some bread," she said during the interview.

Like others — shoppers as well as vendors — at Thursday's Market, McCready likes the "new" venue for the event.

After several years on Grinnell Plaza in the heart of downtown Sheridan, the Farmers' Market this year was moved, initially, to the parking lot of the Sheridan Senior Citizens Center on Smith Street. Then, on July 26, the Senior Center parking lot was needed to accommodate those in town for the Wyoming Senior Olympics.

Whitney Benefits offered the use of its park, which is adjacent to the Senior Center and fronts Alger Avenue almost directly across the street from the library.

Roger Bent, executive director of Downtown Sheridan Association — a co-sponsor of the event — said Whitney not only saved the Farmers' Market from having to shut down during Senior Olympics but offered the use of Whitney Commons for the duration of the Market, which will continue through Sept. 13. Bent said the change in location from Grinnell Plaza to the Whitney Commons area provides more parking, better access to public facilities "and a quiet, relaxing green space that encourages patrons to enjoy the atmosphere of the market and its vendors."

The market features local produce in addition to other locally made artisan products.

"Entertainment will be featured in the Whitney Commons amphitheatre, and the fountain will be operating to cool off kids of all ages visiting the market in the summer heat," Bent added.

Whitney Commons is also close enough to downtown Sheridan, Bent said, to tie into "Thursday Night Alive" on downtown Main Street, during which a

group of downtown retailers stay open later on Thursday evenings.

"The goal is to encourage downtown shoppers to also attend the farmers' market and vice versa," he said. He and Renee King, Sheridan College ag instructor and Farmer's Market co-sponsor, believe the change in venue has breathed new life into what had seemed to become, on Grinnell Plaza, a somewhat tired event.

It's been "terrific," according to King. "The whole change of location ... The environment is really conducive to what a farmers' market should be like," she said. "There are different kids' activities every week. We like to keep the focus on local agriculture."

Other vendors as well as customers agree.

"I love this location," said Carol Laresche, a partner in the Clear Creek Valley Produce stall. "I love this location. This is perfect. The atmosphere here is good."

Tessa Dalton, a member of the Sheridan Garden Club — which maintains a space at the market — said, "I come with my dog every week. I always get some lemonade (and) sausage from Sheridan College."

Among those at the Farmer's Market this week was Miss Wyoming Jennifer McCafferty, who was signing photos and selling baked goods. The baked goods sales, she said, were to raise money for Miss Wyoming's travel expenses and participation in the 2008 Miss America pageant.

"And, I like to bake," she added. Another enthusiastic participant was Ann Lovetian, who brought organically grown produce from her Safe Sparrow Farm outside Big Horn and carries a line of other organic products grown elsewhere in Wyoming. "I think the new location is working out well for the patrons," she said.

"I like this spot," said local resident Rhonda Duncan, who brought vegetables and sourdough bread and sold out of pretty much everything before 5:30 p.m. Duncan's daughter, Tess Lannan, used her mother's booth as well for a display of her hand-made jewelry.

Big Horn resident Tom Varcalli offered a bit of everything, including a chance for people to sign up for deliveries of fresh eggs from his 70 to 80 chickens. "Next week," Varcalli promised, "there'll be a lot of tomatoes here."

Sheridan's Senior Citizens Center, in addition to offering fresh lemonade to market attendees, has been advertising its community garden, which will be coming next year.

Overall, everyone seems to appreciate the new location, and business at the Farmer's Market is brisk.

"It's lovely," McCready said. "I think it is so much nicer than a parking lot." And, she added, "I will be coming back."

Quote ...

"The environment is really conducive to what a farmers' market should be like."

Renee King

Sheridan College ag instructor and Farmer's Market co-sponsor

Wildlife observers generate nearly \$1.4 billion in Colorado

DENVER (AP) — A new federal report found that wildlife-watching, including wildlife photography and bird-watching, generated nearly \$1.4 billion for Colorado's economy last year, far outpacing revenue from hunting and fishing.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey found that an estimated 2.4 million people participate annually in Colorado wildlife-watching, up 56 percent since 2001.

About 677,000 people hunted in Colorado and another 265,000 went fishing last year, according to the national survey released Thursday.

Fishing pumped about \$582 million into the economy and hunting produced \$448 million.

"More and more people are making a point to watch wildlife," said Tyler Baskfield, Colorado Division of Wildlife spokesman.

"They're buying a spotting scope or buying binoculars or going to the Estes Park elk festival in September or to the sandhill-crane festival in Lamar in December."

The number of anglers, though, dropped 26 percent in Colorado since 2001. Participating in hunting dropped 6 percent.

"Urbanization probably has a lot to do with it," Baskfield said. "Forty years ago, it seemed like there were a lot more people in small towns that had access to places to hunt and fish."

Still, hunting and fishing fees make up the bulk of funding for the state Division of Wildlife.

In the eight-state mountain region, Colorado drew the most anglers, hunters and wildlife watchers last year.

Nationally, fishing has declined by 12 percent since 2001 and hunting has dropped 4 percent, a figure within the survey's margin of error.

Last year, about 87 million people, or 38 percent of Americans 16 and older, spent \$120 billion hunting, fishing or observing wildlife. Of those, 30 million, or 13 percent, fished; 12.5 million, or 5 percent, hunted; and 71 million, or 31 percent watched wildlife.

The National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation has been conducted every five years since 1955.

On the Net: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation:

<http://federalaid.fws.gov/surveys/surveys.html>

Business briefs

Rendezvous Trading Co. in Ranchester is celebrating its grand opening this weekend.

Owners including former Sheridan County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Melissa Butcher.

The celebration, including a formal ribbon-cutting, started Friday morning and continues 9 a.m.-7 p.m. today and 11 a.m.-3

p.m. Sunday with refreshments, entertainment and prizes.

The store carries camping, fishing, hunting and backpacking supplies as well as clothing lines including Marmot, Sierra Designs, Ibex and GoLite.

The store is at 652 US Highway 14, across the street from the bear sculpture in front of Big Bear Taxidermy.

Business news? Call Pat at 672-2431

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The doctors and staff of Mountain View Veterinary Hospital are pleased to announce that Rachel Kramer has joined our firm serving in the position of veterinary technician. Rachel spent six weeks this summer serving as an intern at the hospital. Her addition to the Mountain View team will ensure that our clients and patients continue to receive the very best customer service and veterinary care available.

Rachel is a graduate of North Dakota State University earning her Bachelor of Science degree in Veterinary Technology. Rachel is originally from Alberta, MN and moved to a ranch near Parkman, WY to be with her fiancé Paul Reinholz.

Rachel has several horses and a cat named Sugarbeet. She enjoys spending her free time horseback riding, gardening and scrapbooking.

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