

Alton Main Street shares social, economic impact of Farmers', Artisans' Market

The 2024 season of the Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market has concluded, and organizers at Alton Main Street recently shared reflections on the vast social and economic impact that this popular event contributes to the community.

Alton Main Street volunteers conducted a survey of vendors and shoppers during the 2024 season, with the intention of gaining a greater understanding of the financial and non-financial impacts of the market. In partnership with the Economics Department at Principia College, the survey data was used to create estimates regarding the impact on our local economy. The survey also highlighted a range of non-financial benefits that the presence of the market contributes to our community.

The study estimated that the Alton Farmers' and Artisans' market generates over \$1.1 million of additional spending in the Alton zip code over the 24-week season, or around \$46,000 per week. This is new spending that would not occur otherwise without the presence of the market, which directly benefits Alton-based vendors and businesses. 76% of the new spending comes from outside of the Alton zip code.

The average vendor takes in around \$12,900 of revenue from the market per season, which is around \$540 per week over 24 weeks. The highest revenue reported by a vendor was \$75,000 over the season. Vendors come to the market from a diverse range of locations, with around 15% coming from Alton and the remainder from 16 other Illinois and Missouri zip codes.

Shoppers who visit the market reported typical spending of around \$25 per week, with around a quarter of respondents

spending over \$40 per week. The highest spend per week reported was \$80. Furthermore, 40% of those that visited reported spending money at local businesses in Alton after attending the market. Around two thirds of those that spend locally after the market came from outside Alton and the typical amount spent was \$15-20 per week.

The average customer reported attending the market 12 times over the course of the 24-week season, and a quarter of visitors come every week of the season. Almost half of those who visit the market come from Godfrey, around a quarter from Alton, and the remainder from other zip codes. An estimated 45,000 shoppers attend the market in total during each season.

The survey also found a range of non-financial positive impacts of the market on the Alton community. These included the opportunity for shoppers and vendors to connect with people in the community, support local businesses, enjoy the atmosphere of Alton's riverfront, and purchase unique products, which benefits the overall consumer experience and draws people to Alton. The high-quality, locally grown food available at the market also provides a regular supply of groceries for residents which are fresh and have not been shipped across the country.

A total of 479 individual vendors participated over the course of the 2024 season, and Alton's market hit another all-time high of vendors this year on July 20 with 158 booths in attendance.

Alton Main Street remains committed to improving access to healthy food by applying for and administering a LinkUP Illinois grant from The Experimental Station based in Chicago. Nearly \$12,000



A drone view of the 2024 Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market. (Courtesy Alton Main Street)

in SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits were distributed this season, and recipients received a dollar-for-dollar match with grant funding which doubled shoppers' buying power for fresh fruits and vegetables.

The 2025 market season will begin on Saturday, May 10 (always Mother's Day weekend) and will run for 24 weeks through Oct. 18. The event takes place rain or shine in the parking lot at the corner of Landmarks Blvd. & Henry Street in Downtown Alton, Illinois.

Shoppers can find a wide selection of locally grown seasonal fruit and vegetables including heirloom varieties and organically grown crops, along with grass-fed beef, pasture-raised poultry, farm fresh eggs, local honey, hot and iced coffee, fresh bread and other baked goods, as well as ready to eat breakfast and lunch items. In addition, fresh cut flowers, potted plants, and a large

assortment of hand-crafted artwork such as pottery, stained glass, soap, candles, and woodworking items are available.

Any products that are handmade by the vendor or homegrown within a 50-mile radius are welcome to be sold. Complimentary booth space is provided for non-profit organizations, and any vendor up to 18 years of age receives their first week free to encourage our youth to try their hand as an entrepreneur.

This year marks the 32nd season of the Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market, organized by Alton Main Street as part of the organization's efforts to revitalize the Downtown Alton historic district. To learn about all of the ways that Alton Main Street is working to improve and promote Alton's historic downtown district, visit www.DowntownAlton.com.

<https://www.ibjonline.com/2024/11/07/alton-main-street-shares-social-economic-impact-of-farmers-artisans-market/>

22 companies invest in SIUE's surveying, geomatics program

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's surveying and geomatics program has raised \$520,000 to market their program to high school students. The four-year bachelor's program is new to SIUE and is a collaboration between the School of Engineering (SOE) and the Department of Geography and Geographic Information Sciences.

This program has a strong advisory board comprised of corporate and

professional leaders in the field. The degree program is the only one of its kind within 300 miles of the St. Louis area. The need for an excellent talent pipeline is a pressing concern for SOE stakeholders, and with this professional program employers are ready to hire SIUE graduates. John Cabage, Ph.D., associate professor and Chair of the Department of Construction, said the funds for marketing the program came from surveying

companies in Illinois and Missouri.

"In six short months, we were able to get investments from 22 different companies," said Cabage. "We asked them to be corporate sponsors of our program, and we explained to them that the funds would strictly be used for recruiting new surveying and geomatics students."

Cabage said the corporate sponsorships set aside \$24,000 for 18 scholarships to be awarded to admitted first-year, sophomore and transfer students as an integral part of the recruiting plan.

School of Engineering Director of Development Lisa Smith said the fundraising campaign was born from the need for more surveying professionals.

"We worked with professional partners and listened to what their needs are, [then] we created this program," Smith said. "The program is a nice balance of sponsorship from the profession, which allowed us to have the money we needed for the recruiting and marketing aspect of the [program's] launch. We are also giving benefits to the professional investors that allows them to engage with our students throughout their four or five-year higher education journey."

The campaign's Founding Partners include American Surveying & Engineering, Cage Civil Engineering, CEMCON, and Hampton, Lenzini & Renwick (HLR). The Impact Partners include ASM Consultants, Horner & Shifrin, Juneau Associates, Mackie Consultants, Manhard Consulting, SAM, Sanchez & Associates, Sherrill Associate, TWM and Volkert.

The campaign's Sustaining Partners

include API Survey, Heneghan and Associates, IPLSA – Northeast Chapter, Oates Associates, Eric Sladek, TWiG Technologies, V3 Companies and Willett, Hofmann & Associates.

With strong employment opportunities and career prospects, Cabage said the program will be appealing to students who like to be outside, students with math skills who can compile data in both office and field environments, students with entrepreneurial business sense and those who can work individually and as a team.

Because of the active engagement of professional partners and industry leaders, students have opportunities to develop relationships within the profession before they graduate into the field. Cabage said a long-term goal is to establish SIUE's program as the premier surveying and geomatics program.

<https://www.ibjonline.com/2024/11/04/22-companies-invest-in-siue-surveying-and-geomatics-program/>

Who are we?

- The Leadership Council is an economic development organization that advocates for Southwestern Illinois
- The organization was founded in 1983 with a simple goal: to bring leaders together to unite our region for growth
- Nearly 250 businesses and organizations belong to our organization, all collaborating to ensure Southwestern Illinois is a great place to live & work
- We have 9 committees working to achieve our organization's goals:
 - Agriculture, Economic Development, Education, Levee Issues Alliance, Membership Communications, Military Affairs, Public Policy, Southwestern Illinois Transportation Enhancement, Workforce Development

We serve the following counties:

- Bond County
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- Jersey County
- Macoupin County
- Madison County
- Monroe County
- St. Clair County
- Washington County

