

Janet Terry and her Community Farmers Market

Twenty years ago, one of the first major farmers markets — the FRESHFARMS Dupont Circle market — opened in Washington, DC. Since then, nearly 200 farmers markets have opened in the metro area, and perhaps one of the most popular ones — at least, in Maryland — is the Olney Farmers & Artists Market in Olney.

That this even began and exploded in popularity is thanks to its founder, Janet Terry, who came up with the idea 11 years ago, more or less on a whim. “It all started when my daughter went to college in Charleston, South Carolina,” Terry said. “I fell in love with the city and visited its amazing farmers market. I told a friend about Charleston’s beautiful market.”

Soon after the visit...

...Terry testified before a local civic association about launching a



local market. “It was completely an accident,” she said. “I already had a full-time job, and this happened so fast.” She found a site in Olney in a shopping center’s parking lot. She then reached out to local farmers and food vendors and started in late October of 2006. “It was a very successful seven-week season,” she said.

Among the original vendors is Falcon Ridge Farm, a premier fruit farm in Westminster, Maryland. “The family has a passion for farming,” Terry said, “They grow and sell paw paws, lemons, peaches, cherries, and plums. The fruits are amazing, and wife and co-owner Nancy MacBride makes all the pound cakes out of the fruits, even

with paw paws.” Another long-time vendor is Eat a Little Something Catering, which sells an eclectic menu of fresh lemonade, barbecue, Belgian waffles, and breakfast burritos. Nearby, the stalwart Natalie’s Naturals sells coffee popsicles.

Growing, growing, growing!

After three years, Terry had to move the market, and, as luck would have it, she was invited to set it up at the site of the old Montgomery General hospital (now MedStar Montgomery Medical Center), also in Olney. “They welcomed us,” she said, adding that the new location offered a large grassy area with trees for shade.

That was a fortunate change because the market had outgrown its space, with vendors and shoppers barely squeezing into the original site. In the new location, the vendor numbers have grown to over 75, including artisans, bakers, a distiller — and farmers, of course — and often other activities such as chef demos and a bike fix-it tent. Depending on the week, there could be wine pairings, a best pie contest, a yoga or zumba demonstration to promote healthy living, or Kids in Biz where young entrepreneurs can sell their specialty cookies or

lemonade. Volunteers from local high and middle schools, and even some who have been there just about every week from the beginning, help with set up, clean up, and escorting people around. “We grew from 300 to thousands of patrons each week,” Terry said. “Now, patrons are even picnicking on the grass...it’s just a relaxing place.”

Serving the local community

Through the years, and at Terry’s direction, the Olney market has concentrated on meeting local needs. The market’s charitable and educational arm, “Friends of the Olney Farmers and Artists Market,” provides vouchers to needy customers to buy fresh produce and sets up cooling tents and water sprinklers on hot market days for those with no air conditioning. Friends also sponsors fundraisers to raise money to fight cancer, drug addiction, and obesity. There is even a free music tent where



Article photos: Lisa Silber

Janet Terry (right) with market colleague Hal Hoiland



Carl Armbruster fixes bikes at the market

struggling local musicians can play and entertain and maybe even grow a following.

Terry notes there is still some ground space for growth. She is searching for other vendors, including a good fish vendor and new ethnic vendors, in order to try out new ideas to enhance the