

Bowdoin Geneva Farmers Market – 2012 End-of-Season Report

The 2012 season was a great one for the Bowdoin Geneva Farmers Market. Records were broken on many fronts and we made significant progress in continuing to expand the reach of our healthy food access efforts to residents of Bowdoin Geneva and patients of the Bowdoin Street Health Center.

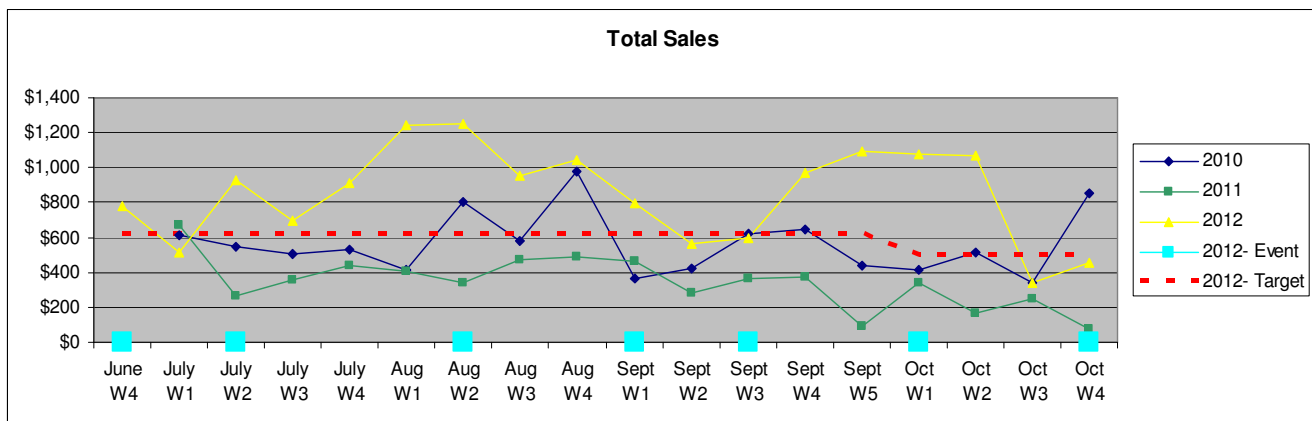
Since 2011, several major changes have been instituted including:

1. Seven special events were scheduled periodically throughout the season at roughly 3-week intervals
2. The addition of seafood to our market offering, which has included a variety of whole and filleted fish, as well as shellfish
3. The addition of certified organic produce and eggs
4. The ability to accept debit and credit cards for purchases made at the market
5. Increased outreach via flyering, neighborhood chalking, and social media (e-mail newsletter, Twitter, Facebook, and a blog)

The market's visibility in the community is steadily increasing as demonstrated by growth both sales and attendance. The Bowdoin Geneva market is fast becoming a citywide example of how implementing creative, community-specific strategies can help to build strong and sustainable markets for locally-produced food in the city's outlying neighborhoods.

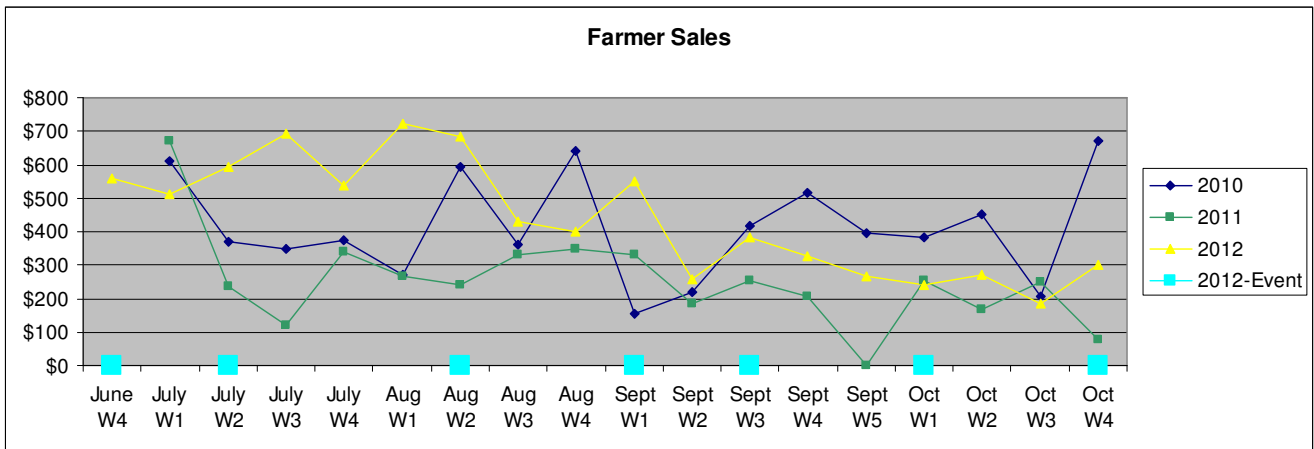
Sales

When combining all food sold at the farmers market - including both shares and retail sales by Cape Cod Fish Share, sales from all farm vendors, and Mei Mei Street Kitchen food truck, a grand total of \$15,870 of food was sold at the Bowdoin Geneva Farmers Market. We well exceeded our 2012 goal of \$10,860 in total sales and fully tripled our sales from the last season. The market's growth this year, alongside the successes in our other programs (including our Farm to Family subsidized CSA program and our small-scale Farm to Store initiative) this season have led to an overall increase in the value of fresh, locally-produced food distributed in Bowdoin Geneva from \$20,225 in 2011 to \$34,195 in 2012, representing an increase of 69.1%.



Overall sales at the market broke the previously elusive \$1,000 threshold on six different occasions over the course of the season. Early season sales were exceptional this year, likely driven by the introduction of the fish offering. Fish sales also drove success for produce vendors early in the season with farmers collectively taking home an average of \$570/week collectively during the months of June, July and August, compared to \$320/week in 2011 and \$450/week in 2010. Our late season bump in total sales is largely attributable to the pre-sold fish shares which guaranteed strong weekly sales over the course of the 4-week distribution. This demonstrates the strength of this hybrid model of combining both traditional retail with “community-supported fishery” shares to ensure a sustainable rate of return for the fish vendor during his trips to Bowdoin Geneva.

Looking at produce sales on their own provides additional insights. While our farm vendors did far better than in seasons past during the early months of the market, later season sales were lower than those demonstrated in 2010 (\$310/week in 2012 versus \$380 in 2010).

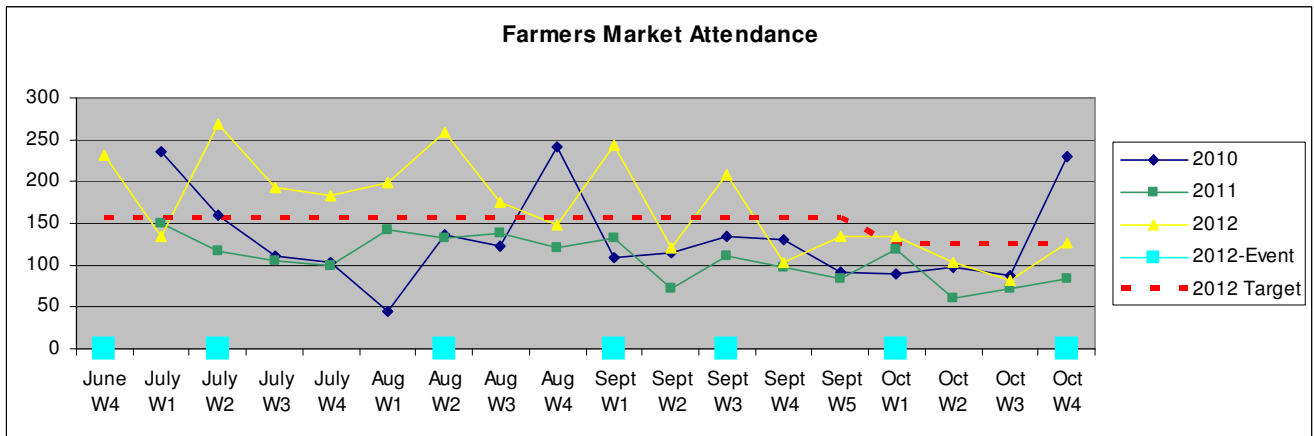


Part of the issue this season, was the difficulty of fruit production due to the hard frost late last spring leading to unmet demand for popular products such as berries in the early season and peaches and apples later on. Additionally, customers in this neighborhood demonstrate a strong preference for mid-summer vegetables – most notably corn and tomatoes. There is still work to be done to improve upon our late-season strategies to further support our farmers to thrive later in the season. However, given the realities of Massachusetts agriculture as well as families’ tightening budgets during the beginning of the school year, the single produce vendor in October seems to be a worthwhile solution to ensure that sales are concentrated sufficiently to cover labor and travel costs for all vendors participating in the market on a given day.

The Food Project, who sold in Bowdoin Geneva from the market’s inception through 2010, remains the vendor whose seasonal sales have been strongest at the Bowdoin Geneva Market. It may be worthwhile to seek guidance from them regarding strategies for late-season success.

Attendance

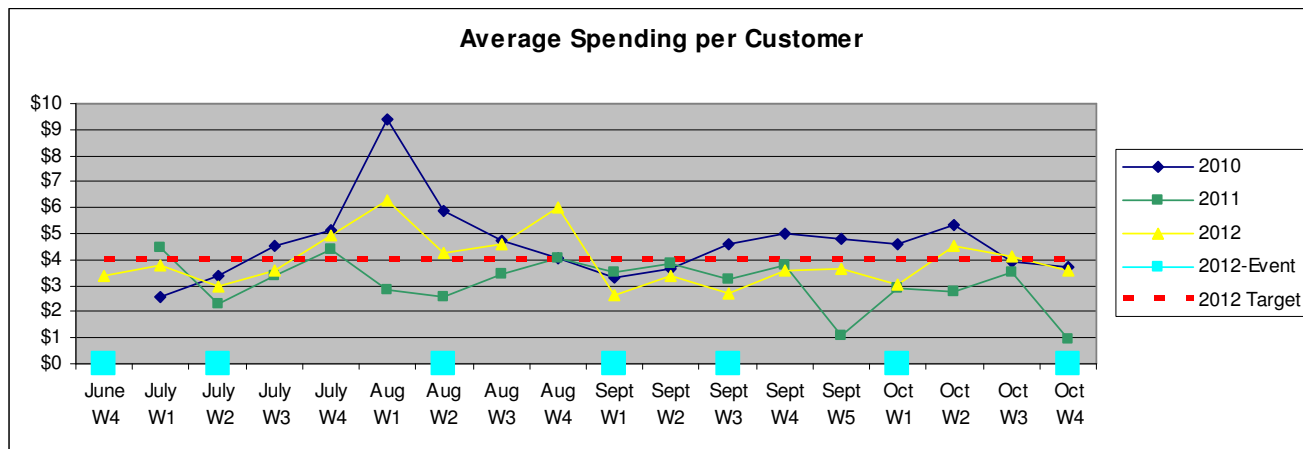
In our June report to our funder, we aimed to increase attendance by 25% over the average of 124 people per week from our best attended market year, 2010. Average attendance for this season was 170 individual visitors per week, representing a 37% increase over last year. Moreover, average attendance on special event days was 225, demonstrating that our additional outreach efforts and special offerings those days did result in a boost in traffic to the market.



Market attendance in the months of September and October decreased as it has historically, but our average for those two months held at 140 as compared to 121 in 2010 and 92 in 2011. It is also important to recognize that the weather cooperated extraordinarily well this season with just one day of very light rain (though worse was predicted) and only one day with temperatures below 60°F.

We also want to ensure that these customers are spending money and bringing home healthy food during their visits to the market. Our goal was to increase average customer spending from last year’s average of \$3.20/market visit to \$4.00/market visit. Actual spending averaged just under this goal at \$3.95/market visit, well above our 2011

figures but below those of 2010 (\$5.15). Our per customer spending on special event days was significantly lower – only \$3.17/market visit – making clear that while special events do boost sales to some extent, they have the most significant influence in bringing community members (and especially children) together at the market.

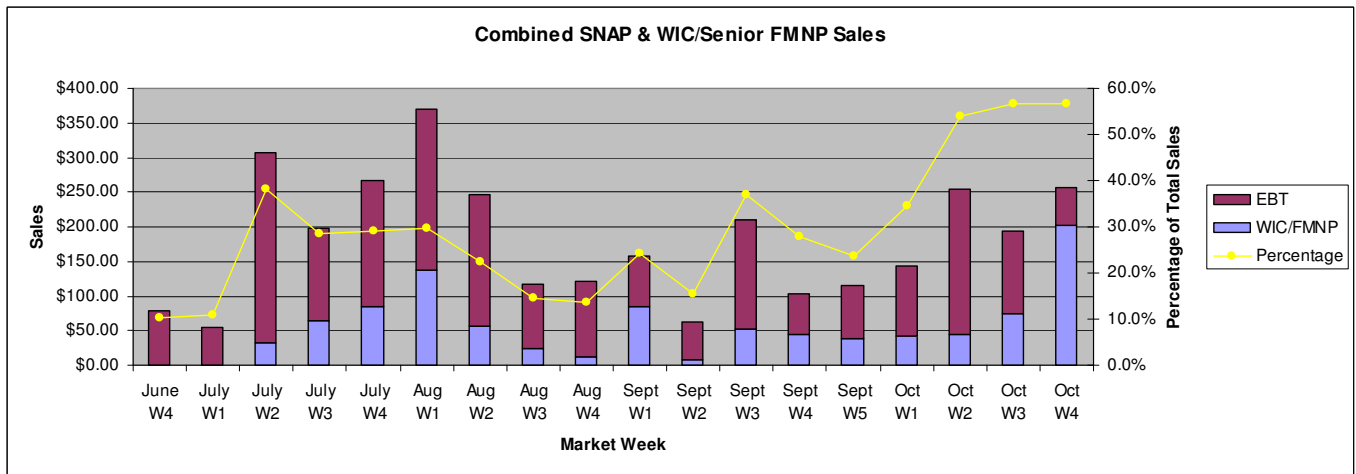


Our special events usually translated into increased sales, but always enhanced attendance. Programmatic visits to the market – i.e. those customers who are enticed to explore the market, especially via the special events, but do not make purchases – are an important ancillary community benefit, but we should also work to encourage at least some amount of spending among all adults who visit the market. When these visits are made by older children from the neighborhood, thinking about “jobs” for these young people to assist with (i.e. flyering about the market in veggie costumes, etc.) may be an additional way to drive sales and encourage even more traffic to the market. Finding ways to incorporate physical activities like dancing, hula hooping, jump roping, or Veggie Twister is another added value we can continue to provide to young market visitors. This season we also raffled off physical activity-themed prizes geared at encouraging young people to engage in active play and aligning with the health center’s messaging around wellness and obesity prevention. Thinking about ways to maximize the potential benefits of the market as a gathering space to promote health and wellness beyond healthy eating will be an important task as we plan for the 2013 season.

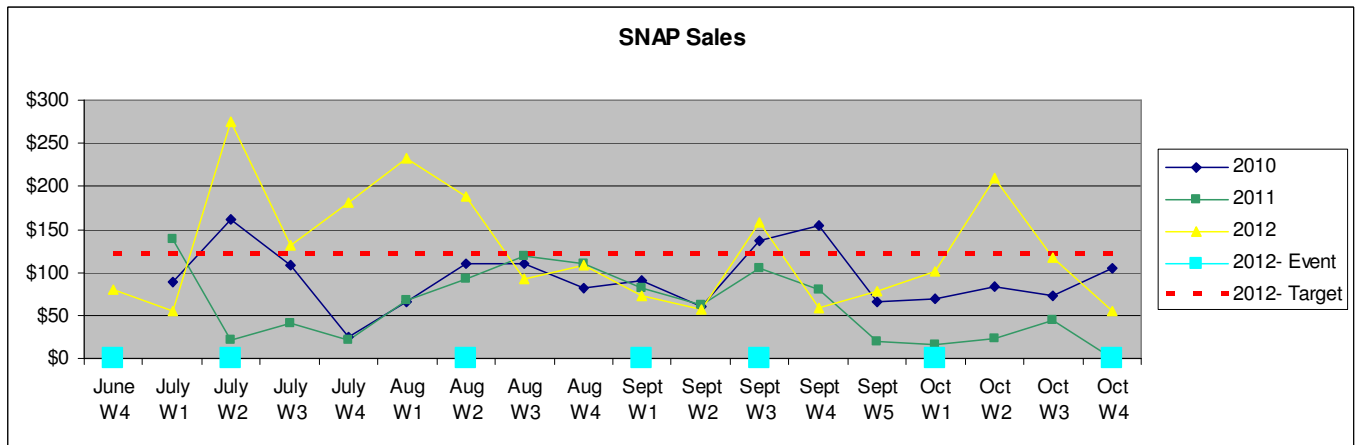
Customer Base

It is becoming increasingly clear that we have two distinct categories of customer who join us at the market each week. The first is the lower-income population of the neighborhood and the health center’s patients, representing a diverse array of cultures. Combined sales from SNAP and WIC/Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) Coupon customers equal one-third of all sales at the farmers market. Sales for this customer group also occur in the form of cash – either due to having previously spent all of their benefits earlier in the month or because they may be ineligible for these benefits for any of a number of reasons. The average spending per transaction for SNAP customers is \$13.35.

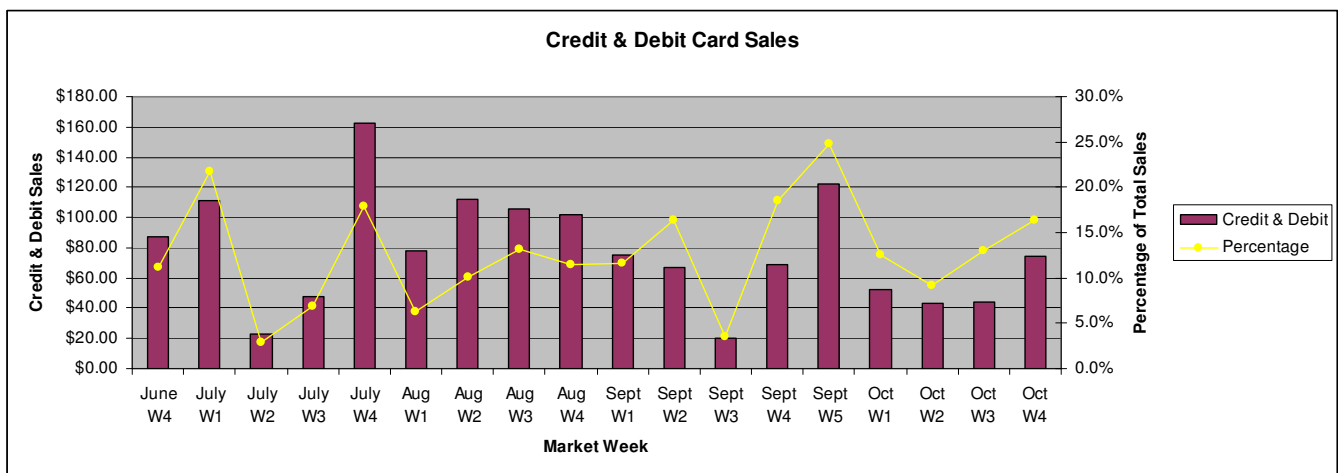
It is also clear that there is increased late-season loyalty among customers who utilize these types of food assistance benefits (see chart on next page). That is, while overall sales decreased markedly during September and October, sales from SNAP and WIC/Senior FMNP remained quite strong. This makes clear the importance of remaining open through the month of October with specific strategies (i.e. only one produce vendor, closing at 6pm) designed to support the vendors as sales slow in the late season.



Our stated goal for 2012 SNAP sales was a seasonal total of \$2,170 or roughly \$120/week, which we exceeded modestly at \$2,250 surpassing our previous high of \$1,585 in 2010. Moreover, while we did not meet our goal to increase SNAP spending from 20% to 25% this year, the growth of spending among SNAP customers kept pace with the growth of the market overall which is a feat given the exponential growth we saw this season. A major goal for the 2013 season will be to further outreach to lower-income customers and specifically customers utilizing federal- and state-issued benefits.



The second group is comprised of the more economically-stable residents of this community in addition to health center staff (who've begun to frequent the market in far greater numbers this year). These customers are more likely to pay with credit or debit cards though some members of the first customer group also utilize this payment option. Credit/debit transactions account for about 12% of total sales with an average transaction of \$17.39. The addition of credit and debit capability this season – with a \$1 convenience fee to cover the costs of additional fees from our terminal service provider – was extremely successful in encouraging higher-volume purchases, perhaps especially for fish. However, even late in the season, many customers remained unaware of the option to pay by card. Thus, additional messaging to this group about their ability to use their cards at the market will be helpful in reducing the inclination to forego shopping if one does not have cash at the moment.



Once 33% for SNAP/WIC and 12% for credit/debit are accounted for, the remaining 58% of sales came from cash customers as well as coupons and other incentives offered by the health center and partner organizations. Though cash transactions cannot be tracked quite as closely, anecdotally our vendors reported that those sales break down similarly between the two income groups with about two-thirds coming from lower-income individuals and one-third from the higher income group.

We are working alongside our vendors to determine an effective product mix to meet the needs of both categories of customers – each of whom are vital to the overall success of our market. Our fish vendor in particular has found a niche in providing both premium seafood products and whole fish which – in addition to its affordability – is far more familiar to the many coastal and islander communities here in Bowdoin Geneva. We hope that we may be able to work with our farmers to grow a few new crops that members of the Cape Verdean community in the neighborhood have expressed particular interest in seeing and that they have difficulty finding in other market outlets.

Teen Involvement

The two teen interns who joined our healthy food access team this summer were exceptional. Funded by the Boston Youth Fund, these teens spent 20-25 hours per week working to improve healthy food access here in their neighborhood. The teens worked to plan and conduct outreach for special events at the market, served as assistant market managers, helped with emergency food distribution at St. Mary's Food Pantry in Uphams Corner, and generated blog posts and other social media documenting and promoting their work. Additionally, the teens were instrumental in executing our small but important Farm to Store initiative in conjunction with Powisset Farm. Through Farm to Store, \$375-worth of locally-produced vegetables were sold to healthy corner stores in Bowdoin Geneva further strengthening the health center's year-round relationships with these neighborhood businesses and helping them to thrive while promoting healthy foods at affordable prices.

Special Events & Field Trips

Our vendors benefitted this season from additional market traffic driven by special events throughout the season. These events targeted specific community sub-groups and engaged a variety of agencies in providing additional information on events, opportunities, and healthy lifestyles. All events included entertainment of some sort and often other "hooks" to draw individuals to the market.

June 28th: Healthy Summer Kick-off

Special Vendor: Ward's Berry Farm
Entertainment: DJ Kenneth Douglas
Health and Nutrition Info: BIDMC Dieticians
Volunteers/Orgs: BNAN, WIC, Dorchester Community Coop

July 12th: Family Fun Day

Intended Audience: WIC parents and neighborhood kids
Food Truck: Mei Mei Street Kitchen
Entertainment: Vegetable Circus
Health and Nutrition Info: BIDMC Dieticians, ICAN Scholars (blood pressure screening)
Volunteers/Orgs: WIC, Dorchester Community Coop

August 9th: Senior Day

Intended Audience: Seniors especially those treated at the health center or who receive FMNP coupons
Special Vendor: JoAnn Winbush, Crafts
Entertainment: David Gallagher Trio
Health and Nutrition Info: UMass Extension, BIDMC Dieticians
Volunteers/Orgs: WIC, Boston DND – Survey
Raffle: 7 different prizes, approx. \$10-15 in value each
Couponing: 300 coupons distributed to BSHC providers and senior-serving agencies, 12 redeemed

August 30th: Back-to-School Block Party

Intended Audience: Families with school-aged kids
Food Truck: Mei Mei Street Kitchen
Entertainment: Vegetable Circus
Health and Nutrition Info: Cooking Matters, BIDMC Dieticians
Volunteers/Orgs: Family Nurturing Center, Next Step Living, WIC
Couponing: 400 coupons distributed to BSHC providers and family agencies, 5 redeemed

September 13th: Fall Fair for Teens

Intended Audience: Neighborhood teens and job-seekers
Food Truck: Mei Mei Street Kitchen
Entertainment: DJ Kenneth Douglas
Special Vendor: Lori Brown, Crafts
Health and Nutrition Info: BSHC Teen Clinic (sexual health information, free condoms)
Volunteers/Orgs: Boston Youth Fund, Next Step Living, Teen Center at St. Peters, (NS: CollegeBound)
Couponing: Twitter promo, 2 redeemed

October 4th: Harvest Festival

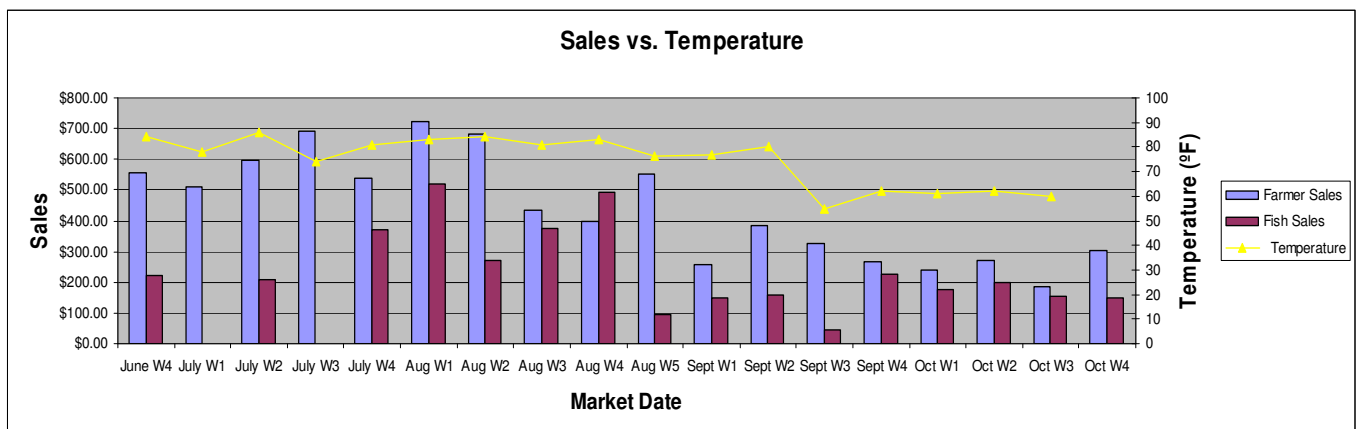
Food Truck: Mei Mei Street Kitchen
Entertainment: Marcella Camargo Silva
Special Vendor: Laurie Brown, Crafts
Volunteers/Orgs: Next Step Living, Bikes Not Bombs
Raffle: 2 healthy eating baskets (geared toward adults), 2 physical activity bundles (geared toward kids)

We began a small-scale coupon initiative during the middle of the season which was successful in encouraging new customers to make purchases at the market. The coupons provided \$1 off a produce purchase of \$5 or more and were distributed by health center providers and partner agencies. Farmers contributed \$0.50 to each dollar coupon redeemed, matched by an additional \$0.50 from BSHC. Similar targeted coupons which reward purchases over a certain volume should be considered for special events in 2013.

We hosted four field trips to the farmers market over the course of the season – three visits from the ABCD Dorchester Neighborhood Service Center’s summer programs and one from the garden club from the Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester¹. Upon arrival, the market manager provided a short introduction to the market and some education on the importance of local food and healthy eating. The young people visiting the market then received \$5 each (provided by the agencies) to spend on produce at the market. Together, these visits generated over \$450 in additional funds for our farmers while students had the opportunity to explore the market and make healthy food purchases to bring home to try with their families. These field trips were extremely successful on all levels and we should consider opportunities to expand this effort for 2013.

Record-Keeping

The Bowdoin Geneva Farmers Market is a leader among Boston’s markets in gathering extensive weekly data from our vendors and examining it in order to continually improve. The strong trust that has been built with our vendors – and is codified in our market policies – allows the market manager to collect sales data by transaction type which in turn enables the types of analyses shown throughout this report. Additionally, the market manager tracks attendance, weather conditions, and outdoor temperature each week in order to monitor trends over time.



The collection of this data over the course of the last four years has allowed us to accurately identify areas of growth in our market and to further develop data-driven strategies to achieve success in building a viable market outlet for our vendors and ensuring that we are continually expanding our reach.

¹ The club leader from BGC Dorchester is also a chef at the Four Seasons Boston and led a fish filleting workshop at the market during their visit.

We are attempting to gain information in order to more fully understand the positioning of the success of our market vis-à-vis other markets in Boston. In particular, we have developed a robust survey attempting to collect similar data from other health center-affiliated markets across the city, but as yet have not had success in obtaining responses from our counterparts in other neighborhoods.

As we move forward, we should look for opportunities to provide leadership to other markets around the city so that they too can benefit from the data collection methodologies we have developed. Our involvement in Healthy Dorchester's initiatives may facilitate the dissemination of our recordkeeping and evaluation models to further improve the healthy food landscape across Dorchester as a whole, improving access for all of its residents.

2013 Proposal

Season Schedule & Special Events

Next season, we plan to open slightly earlier in June in order to more fully establish the market before taking off July 4th (which falls on a Thursday). Additionally, we've observed many older adults who are present at the health center between 2pm and 3pm as we set up the market but whose transportation usually arrives prior to the opening of the market. In consultation with our vendors, we are exploring the possibility of extending the hours of the market by a half hour in order to enable these individuals to take advantage of the market.

Special events were also extremely effective this season in increasing traffic to the market, improving sales for our vendors, and amplifying the visibility of our market as a community gathering space. For 2013, we propose to consistently hold our special events on the Third Thursday of each month. Aside from having a catchy title, our customers will begin to expect a consistent monthly event that week. Additionally, by the Third Thursday, all SNAP beneficiaries will have received their benefits for the month and we will not be so close to the end of the month that either cash or SNAP customers are likely to be especially low on funds. Thus, this week seems to be an ideal one to hold regular events.

We hope that we can engage community agencies in co-sponsoring these events alongside the health center to share responsibility for planning and outreach. Additionally, these events can be structured in such a way that each one highlights a service provided here at the health center which is aligned with the event's theme. The proposed event schedule (see last page of this document for calendar) is as follows:

1. Healthy Summer Kick-off: June 20th
2. Family Fun Day: July 18th
3. Senior Celebration: August 15th
4. Teen Health Fair: September 19th
5. Food Day (4th Thursday, nation-/citywide): October 24th
6. Halloween Harvest Festival: October 31st

Couponing and Fruit & Vegetable Prescriptions

Finally, our couponing efforts this season demonstrated the potential for incentivizing market purchases. There is certainly room to expand upon these and to work with partner agencies to disseminate coupons to their constituents and encourage patronage of the farmers market. Additionally, there are opportunities to work more closely with BSHC providers to distribute coupons (especially those tied to special events) so that our patients may also benefit from this low-cost promotional effort which costs only \$.50/coupon since it is matched by the vendors.

Likewise, enhancing the connections between the health center's healthy food access work and its clinical practice is an important goal for 2013. We hope to do this by piloting a Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) whereby providers may "prescribe" produce purchases at the Bowdoin Geneva market to their patients. Enrolled patients will be provided with \$5 per week per household member up to a total of \$20/week. Prescriptions will be written for 4-week intervals at which point they may be refilled by scheduling a follow-up appointment with the health center's nutritionist. We hope to partner with 1-2 primary care providers to implement the program. Eligibility will be determined based on identifying adult patients (especially those who are the head of a household with one or more children) with Body Mass Indices over 30 who also exhibit at least one co-morbidity of diabetes, hypertension, or mood disorder. We aim to enroll 5-10 individuals in the program which will be funded through donations collected through our sponsor farmshare program.

Both of these initiatives will serve to bolster sales at the market, making it more financially-viable for our vendors. In particular, by transitioning our on-site subsidized farmshare model (which supported a farm which was not a vendor at our market) to the FVRx program, we will more directly support the sustainability of the Bowdoin Geneva Farmers Markets and the farmers who sell here.

Bowdoin Street Health Center Healthy Food Access Initiatives Impact Data 2009-2012

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Value of Fresh Food Distributed in Bowdoin Geneva				
Total Farmers' Market Sales	\$4,740	\$9,485	\$5,100	\$15,870
- Bounty Bucks/EBT Market Sales	\$485	\$1,585	\$1,040	\$2,251
- Bounty Bucks/EBT Percentage	10%	17%	20%	19%
- Cape Cod Fish Shares	--	--	--	\$3,750
- Food Truck Sales	--	--	--	\$215
Farm to Family Program	--	\$1,900	\$13,170	\$16,080
Farm to Store Pilot Program	--	--	\$530	\$375
Powisset Farm Shares	--	\$1,600	\$1,300	\$1,600
Additional Bulk Sales Facilitated	--	\$94	\$125	\$270
Total Value of Fresh Food Distributed	\$4,740	\$13,079	\$20,225	\$34,195
Total Value of Fresh Food Distributed in BIDMC/Longwood Area				
Farm to Family Program	--	\$2,215	\$26,180	\$34,920
- Sponsorships Collected	--	--	\$5,680	\$6,720
- Percent Funded	--	100%	89%	70%
Total Farmstand Sales	--	--	\$7,320	\$5,200
Total Value of Fresh Food Distributed	--	\$2,215	\$33,500	\$40,120
Total Impact of BSHC Healthy Food Access Initiatives	\$4,740	\$15,300	\$53,725	\$74,315

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Participation Levels in Bowdoin Geneva				
Farmers' Market Attendance	65	124	107	170
- Spending per customer	(no data)	\$4.64	\$3.12	\$3.95
Vendors Selling at Farmers Market	3	5	4	6
Farm to Family Subsidized Shareholders	--	10	40	60
Farm to Family Distribution Sites	--	1	5	5
Farm to Store Participating Stores	--	--	5	4
Families Receiving Powisset Farm Shares	--	70	45	50
Participation Levels in BIDMC/Longwood Area				
Farm to Family Full-Price/Sponsorship Shareholders	--	20	82	97
- Contributing Sponsors	--	20	71	84
- Sponsorship Percentage	--	100%	87%	87%
Farmstand Attendance	--	--	122	134
Vendors Selling at Farmstand	--	--	1	1

	2009	2010	2011	2012
Distribution Timeline in Bowdoin Geneva				
Total Weeks of Farmer's Market Season	16	16	17	18
Total Weeks of Farm to Family Distribution	--	10	20	16
Total Weeks of Farm to Store Purchasing	--	--	11	6
Distribution Timeline in BIDMC/Longwood Area				
Total Weeks of Farm to Family Distribution/Farmstand	--	10	16	16

Proposed 2013 Calendar of Events

Bowdoin Geneva Food in the 'Hood

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
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27	28	29	30	31		

FEBRUARY						
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24	25	26	27	28		

MARCH						
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31						

APRIL						
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28	29	30				

MAY						
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26	27	28	29	30	31	

JUNE						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

JULY						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

AUGUST						
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SEPTEMBER						
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29	30					

OCTOBER						
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27	28	29	30	31		

NOVEMBER						
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DECEMBER						
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

- Food in the 'Hood Meeting
- BG Farmers Market open (19 weeks)
- BG Farmers Market Special Event (6 events + Thanksgiving)
- F2F Subsidized Share Distribution (16 weeks)
- F2F Sponsor Share Distribution (18 weeks)
- BYF Summer Youth Program (7 weeks)

Special Events 2013

- June 20th - Healthy Summer Kickoff
- July 18th - Family Fun Day
- August 15th - Senior Celebration
- September 19th - Teen Health Fair
- October 24th - Food Day (nation-/citywide event)
- October 31st - Halloween Harvest Festival
- November 26th - Thanksgiving Baskets