

Thursday, April 24, 2008

The debut of the market



Glenn Clayton Jr., of Hungry Hill Farm in Nelson County, gives Virginia Ross a bit of honey to taste at the Waynesboro Farmers Market on Wednesday.

I recognized a lot of faces at the debut of the [Waynesboro Farmers Market](#) on Wednesday afternoon. A lot of folks I know from around the community stopped by to have a look at the new market (I spotted Adrienne Hamlyn, children’s programming coordinator for the Waynesboro Public Library, and Waynesboro Downtown Development Inc. director Kimberly Watters, among others). However, most of the familiar faces were selling their home-grown wares from behind tables and booths — vendors who I see every Saturday morning at the Staunton-Augusta Farmers Market.

Many of them recognized me, too. When I stopped by [Heartland Harvest](#) farm’s table to buy some cress and spring onions, Jim Showalter gave me a big smile. So did his daughter, who was manning the cash register. “Don’t you normally come to Staunton on Saturdays?” she asked.



The Waynesboro Farmers Market opened in Constitution Park on Wednesday.

Jim and I chatted for a bit about Heartland Harvest while he showed me pictures of his chickens and turkeys, whipping out his photo album like a proud father. One photo showed the expansive green grass of the Heartland Harvest farm spotted with dozens of chickens, the Blue Ridge Mountains rising in the background. All of Heartland Harvest's poultry is free-range, Jim explained — "The get to go out and wander and eat all the grasses and bugs that birds should eat."

The Showalters have been farming since Jim's dad was a young man. The Waynesboro Farmers Market is the first time that they've branched out from selling at their farm store and the Staunton-Augusta Farmers Market.

"Now's the time to get involved," Jim said. "There's an interest in this sort of thing now."

A few booths away, Hungry Hill Farm's Glenn Clayton Jr. gave out tastes of the three varieties of honey that the farm collects from its 150 honeybee colonies. (How many bees are in a colony? "A lot of bees," he said.) Clayton explained to interested customers the flowers that contributed to each variety, the time of year that the honey was collected and which variety of honey was best for cooking, eating raw or putting in tea. He also gave out details about the life of the honeybee — "A bee only makes a quarter of a teaspoon of honey in its lifespan," Clayton said. "They don't live very long."



Amy Childs, of Nelson County, sits behind her display of plants at the Waynesboro Farmers Market on Wednesday.

On the other side of the gazebo, Amy Childs sat knitting a pair of socks behind her table of starter plants. Childs explained that she picked the plants she put on sale Wednesday based on their tendency to repel hungry deer. "We have a lot of them where I live, and they don't eat these plants," she said.

Amy is the market director for the Nelson County Farmers Market, and she thought Waynesboro's Wednesday afternoon markets would be a good way to branch out. "I'm very excited about this market, because it's the time for it and this is the place for it," Childs said. "Farmers markets are excellent. Buy fresh, buy local."

Wednesday's produce selection was mainly limited to greens and asparagus — it's pretty early in the season, yet — but there were plenty of starter plants of all varieties for sale, including herbs, flowers and vegetables. Locally-made products from wine to bread were also on sale.

"It's been a good day for a first market," Clayton said. "It's a pretty good start."

[Click here](#) see a gallery of my photos from Wednesday's market, or [click here](#) to see all the photos as a slideshow. For more about the Waynesboro Farmers Market, read Jimmy LaRue's story, "[Farmer's Market Reopens,](#)" published Thursday.



A petunia sits on the sale table for Singing Earth Produce on the opening day of Waynesboro Farmers Market on Wednesday. Two patrons of the market are seen in the background.