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Fair Grove named Missouri Farmers' Market of the Year

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Missouri's Director of Agriculture Dr. Jon Hagler named the Fair Grove Farmers' Market the state's best in 2012 - an honor awarded each year to a farmers' market that sets the example of adding value to their communities and connecting farmers to consumers through fresh, local foods.

The Fair Grove Farmers' Market was applauded for its youth programs, educational outreach and producer development efforts.

"Farmers' markets provide an affordable option for consumers to get to know the folks who produce their food," Dr. Hagler said. "In doing so, these markets place a high-quality product on consumers' tables and more dollars in the producers' pockets, benefitting both farmers and consumers. The Fair Grove Farmers' Market exemplifies how to maintain a successful market - offer fresh, locally-grown produce and connect to youth and their community."

In addition to the award, the Fair Grove Farmers' Market will receive \$1,000 to support its market and programs; a custom banner proclaiming its award; and 500 magnets promoting the market sponsored by the Missouri Farmers' Market Association. Located under a pavilion at the



historic Wommack Mill in downtown Fair Grove, the market is in its 13th season this year. The market is open Wednesdays from 3 to 6:30 p.m.

It is a "growers only" market, meaning that all goods sold (including crafts) are required to be produced by the vendor presenting them.

"It is such an honor to be recognized as the finest farmers' market in the state," said Deb VanBenthusen, market co-manager. "The market members have worked so hard in the past few years to increase the awareness and importance of farmers' markets. This award means so much to our community."

This is the second award for the Fair Grove Farmers' Market; it was also Missouri's 2010 Farmers' Market of the Year. The market is co-managed by Deb VanBenthusen and Brad Gray. In addition to locally-sourced foods, flowers and crafts for sale, the market regularly provides entertainment and demonstrations. Food service is also available from the market's certified kitchen, and children can learn about gardening at the market's "Growing with Kids" program.

There are currently more than 220 farmers' markets on Missouri's Farmers' Market Map. The Farmers' Market of the Year is sponsored annually by AgriMissouri and the Missouri Farmers' Market Association. The winner is selected through a competitive application process. Markets must nominate themselves for the honor by completing an application each spring, including letters from the market's customers, farmers and leaders.

AgriMissouri, a program within the Missouri Department of Agriculture, promotes Missouri-grown agricultural products and assists producers in developing markets. The Missouri Farmers' Market Association provides training and other services for community markets in



Missouri.

For more information about farmers' markets, including a complete listing of farmers' markets in Missouri, log on to mda.mo.gov or agrimissouri.com. For more information about the Missouri Department of Agriculture and its programs, visit <http://www.mda.mo.gov>.

