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## Fair Grove named Missouri Farmers Market of the Year

May 5, 2010

Director of Agriculture Dr. Jon Hagler named the Fair Grove Farmers Market the state's best in 2010. This honor is 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.

Hagler made the presentation at the Fair Grove market on Wednesday, April 28, the regular day for the market to be open.

Fair Grove has finished in second place three of four times in the past, according to Deb VanBenthusen, market manager. The award is especially impressive considering the fact that there are 67 farmers markets listed in the state agriculture department's Missouri Farmers Market Association brochure.

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

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

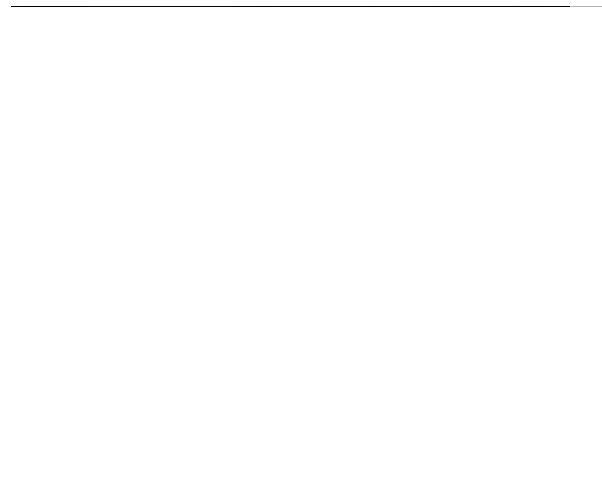


Located under a pavilion at the historic Wommack Mill in downtown Fair Grove, the market entered its 11th season two weeks ago. The market is open from 3:30 to 7 p.m. every Wednesday in 2010 through Oct. 6. A “growers only” market, all goods sold (including crafts) are required to be produced by the vendor presenting them.

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.

“It is such an honor to be recognized as the finest farmers market in the state,” said VanBenthusen. “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.”

In addition to naming the Farmers’ Market of the Year, other Missouri farmers markets were recognized in a number of categories. One of those was Fair Grove once again. It won in the category of Best Advertising/Marketing Campaign. The market was recognized for its integrated use of print advertising, Web content and direct marketing tactics, as well as original, creative artwork to promote the market.



The Farmers Market of the Year award is sponsored annually by AgriMissouri and the Missouri Farmers Market Association. AgriMissouri, a program within the Missouri Department of Agriculture, promotes Missouri-grown agricultural products and assists producers in developing markets.



In her remarks following the award presentation, VanBenthusen thanked the community, the kids and their parents for bringing the kids to the market every week. She also thanked Larry and Josephine Dowell for educating the kids.

“And to the Buffalo Reflex for keeping our little but mighty town in the paper,” she said. “We are so grateful to the historical society and the Lions Club to let us use the grounds and the pavilion each year.”

She also thanked Jim and CC , who have been a major part of the market for several years. They are no longer on the market but can be found at the Bolivar market. Jim is now president of the Missouri Farmers Market Association.

In addition, she thanked the Fair Grove School District and her husband, Steve.

