

Farmers Market Opens in Esparto Labor Day Weekend

Esparto is set to host the Capay Valley Regional Farmers Market on September 4th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Esparto Community Park. The grand opening event will not only feature produce, arts and crafts from the region, but also a Watermelon Festival, live music, and a clown.

Thanks to a number of local groups and volunteer residents dedicated to assuring the future of the region, this long-time idea is at last set to come to fruition Labor Day weekend.

“We began the process of developing a farmers market in Esparto more than two and a half years ago,” said Sue Heitman, President of Capay Valley Vision. “It is exciting to see it finally coming together.”

A farmers market was identified by the community as a way to meet both economic and community development goals. “We strongly believe that the vitality of the economy of the Capay Valley-Esparto Region begins with a strong sense of community, and that a farmers market is a great way achieve it,” explained Heitman.

While the Farmers Market will bring people together, it will also showcase the products grown, produced and raised in the region, giving area residents and visitors alike the opportunity to purchase them.

“A great deal of what is produced here is actually sold in markets in San Francisco and the Bay Area,” said Temra Costa of Community Alliance with Family Farmers and interim manager of the Farmers Market. “The Farmers Market will be an easy way for local residents to get access to the wonderful agriculture products that are grown and raised here.”

The Capay Valley Regional Farmers Market is designed not just as a place to find and purchase locally grown produce, but also as a place for families to come together and for residents to meet their neighbors.

A steering committee of local groups seeks to build a local market for the Capay Valley-Esparto Region’s agriculture and to help create a cohesive population that understands and appreciates the region. “We want to bring neighbors together in downtown Esparto to meet one another, but it is also important to have visitors stop and purchase some of our fine, locally-grown products.” said Lynn Rolston, a member of the Esparto Chamber of Commerce and co-owner of Lamb Valley’s FreeHeart Farm.

Preparation for the Farmers Market has been intense. Organizers have been preparing for the opening of the market by signing up vendors, helping producers become certified by the Yolo County Ag Commissioner, and working closely with representatives of the Davis Farmers Market. “It’s great to have a one of the best models of a farmers market in

the state here locally,” said Costa. “Their management has been extremely supportive and helpful.”

Beyond agricultural vendors, the Capay Valley Regional Farmers Market will offer children’s activities, nutrition education exhibits, art and crafts, a clown and other entertainment.

The Watermelon Festival challenges the community to eat a ton of watermelons and will feature five contests including a watermelon eating grand finale, bocce watermelon rolls, and seed spitting for distance and accuracy. Prizes will be awarded for all contests (watermelons, of course).

The Capay Valley Regional Farmers Market will take place at the Esparto Community Park on September 4th, October 9th, November 13th and December 11th. Following a hiatus for the winter months, it is scheduled to return in April of 2005 on a weekly basis.

For more information about the Capay Valley Regional Farmers Market, please contact Thomas Nelson, Executive Director of Capay Valley Vision at (530) 796-4160.

