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Photography Provided

The Eastwood Village Council (EVC) is an advocacy group representing communities in eastern Jefferson County. Their main focus is on community enrichment, managed development planning, and infrastructure improvements in support of the tremendous growth in the area, both currently and in the near future.

Five years ago the EVC started kicking around some community enrichment ideas, and a farmers market was introduced as an option. One of the men on the council was designated as the market manager and he secured sponsorships and vendors. According to Bob Federico, chairman of the EVC, the Eastwood Village Farmers Market started from humble beginnings, meeting first at the Eastwood Recreation Center with just 10 vendors before word of mouth caused the market to grow both in popularity and in size. Once they outgrew the parking lot at the recreation center, they moved to The Parklands of Floyds Fork, enabling more parking, additional vendors, better exposure and easier access.

The response from the community was extremely positive.

"Out here on the far east end, there's nothing but Kroger to the east and Kroger to the west, and an IGA," Federico says. "When people had the opportunity to come, they seemed to enjoy it."

Market vendors have always provided a wide variety of products, including produce, eggs, beef and baked goods.

"Even when the farmers market was small in size, items were in high demand," says Federico, noting that vendors sell a broad blend of Kentucky Proud products including grass-fed beef, pork, free-range chicken, non-GMO eggs, assorted baked goods, locally grown produce and vegetables, artisan cheeses, dog food and treats, in-season peaches and apples, Amish goods and more.

In past years they have hosted arts and crafts fairs, a First Responders day, and a Farm to Fork Dinner. The First Responders event involves the fire department coming out to

interact with and educate consumers.

"They bring their trucks with the 'woos' and the kids love it," says Federico, who plans to organize that event again this summer.

Amy and Dan Skinner, owners of Skinner Farms, have had a vendor space at the Eastwood Village Farmers Market since the market moved to The Parklands. Selling pastured chicken and pastured pork, eggs, and honey, they always enjoy doing business with their loyal patrons who return week after week.

"A lot of people who come to this market are interested in fitness," Amy Skinner says. "These people are concerned with the food they put in their mouths and the quality of what's in it. That's why we do what we do. We want to produce a premium product that's good for you."

Last year was challenging due to the coronavirus. For starters, the park was shut down for the first month of the season, and instead of starting the Saturday after the Derby, organizers had to wait another



four weeks. Once they started hosting the market, they found that many people were shopping online, which made sense given the circumstances. The problem, however, was that consumers were purchasing from vendors' websites, then picking up their meat and produce at the market, leaving a limited supply of product available for shoppers.

The market followed all CDC and Kentucky Department of Agriculture guidelines for farmers markets, including masking, social distancing, hand sanitizing and signage, but they did see attendance fluctuations.

"Attendance suffered the second half of last year, and I think shortages of product hurt us more than anything else," says Federico, who is hopeful that this season is a much different story. "As vaccine distribution increases across the region, we look forward to a near return to normal as the market begins its new season. We will continue to follow those guidelines this year as CDC and state and local governments require."

The Skinners, who have sold at different markets, say this particular market is a great one to visit, partly because families can make a whole day trip out of it. The park is full of fun activities, including a bike trail and a creek for kayaking.

"We're hoping that the market continues to grow and will become the biggest one in

Louisville," Skinner says.

The Amish vendors, who make a four-hour trip each week from eastern Kentucky to participate in the market, show up with an entire truckload of items to sell, such as baked goods and pumpkins during the season.

And then there are the mouth-watering omelets.

"As always, the Block Deli will continue to provide on-site omelets, which are always a great hit with attendees," Federico says.

In addition to providing products to the community in a family-safe and pet-friendly environment, the Eastwood Village Farmers Market allows the EVC to hear from East End residents about their concerns and needs. For example, with the recent sale of property to Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) for the new East End Middle School on Echo Trail, along with the approval of phase one of the Echo Trail subdivision, the EVC has heard countless concerns about traffic impacts, in particular surrounding the Shelbyville Road and Eastwood Cut Off Road intersection.

"It's already rated an 'F' as a failing intersection, so the EVC is in constant discussions with state, local and mayor's office officials, along with JCPS, to focus resources to ensure infrastructure needs are met ahead of the school and subdivision openings," Federico

says. "The EVC views safety for its residents and children as paramount."

A primary concern is that the road geometry doesn't allow for sufficient vision when making a left-hand turn.

"If you're sitting at the intersection and you want to go left, you have to turn your head 180 degrees to be able to see the traffic coming toward you," Federico says.

In addition, an independent traffic study was conducted and it estimated that the wait time to make a left-hand turn at that intersection will exceed 21 minutes once the school and subdivision are complete. This is why it's vital that the intersection be restructured and Shelbyville Road widened.

"It cannot handle the traffic today, much less what would happen in two years when the subdivision is built," Federico says. "It's difficult with today's volumes, but imagine an additional 1,000 cars, school buses, staff, etcetera."

That's why he's spoken to members of the Louisville Planning Commission as well as state representatives, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, and the superintendent of JCPS.

"What's frustrating is that they all agree it's got to be done, that it's really important, and that it's a super dangerous intersection, yet we are no closer today than we were two years ago," Federico says. "The EVC is the stakeholder that's carrying the flag to determine how we can get this intersection restructured to change the angle of it, widen the road, and put in signals."

The Eastwood Village Farmers Market season will begin on Saturday, May 8, and run through September 25. Hours run from 8 a.m. until noon. To become a vendor or sponsor for 2021, to make a donation or to request additional information on the Market or the EVC, call 502-548-2871, email eastwooddevc@yahoo.com, mail to Eastwood Village Council, P.O. Box 92, Eastwood, KY 40018-0092 or visit www.eastwoodvillagecouncil.com.