

First market of the season draws more than 200 customers



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Despite the unrelenting rain, none of the vendors or patrons' spirits were dampened at the first Bancroft Farmers Market at Riverside Park on May 20. Open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., as it will be all season, everyone's enthusiasm at getting back together for this yearly event was evident. Co-managers of the market Fraser Young and Sophia Maslowski spoke with Bancroft This Week about the market's return. Young told Bancroft This Week that this is their second year running the market. He co-manages the market with Maslowski, Jan Shantz and Mark Carter, and they each take the reins one Saturday a month, allowing the others to have that time off. "This is our second year. The first year was easy, the second year even easier. Everyone's got their own business. We're all adults and everyone manages and it's a really nice family atmosphere," he says. Young says that this family market atmosphere extends to the off-season, where they still get together for barbecues, potlucks and sled days. Maslowski says that last year, there was a core group of vendors that developed and that they have some new ones this year, like the Bancroft Field Naturalists and Virginia Sweets Bakery. "We love the venue. Someone commented a while back 'it's not hidden behind the post office is it?' But this is the best location in our opinion. The shade as well. Millennium Park, where it was before, it was just blazing hot. So this is really nice," she says. Young said one of the other reasons they chose Riverside Park was because of the kids' playground equipment and the beach along the river, as it gives the kids something to do while their parents and caregivers work at the market. Young wanted to thank Andra [Kauffeldt, the Town of Bancroft manager] and Angela [Armstrong, receptionist] for their help with registration and insurance and making sure all the logistics were in place. "They actually help us with a lot of the heavy lifting bureaucratically which is nice. The town has been an amazing partner bringing the market back to Bancroft," he says. Maslowski says that each manager has stepped into an area and covers it well. For instance, she handles the marketing and communications, Young has the interactions with the town, and Shantz she refers to as their anchor, a committed vendor who is there every week. "I can't imagine one manager doing this, it's a full-time job," she says. Young says that they have a market sponsor, who takes care of the insurance and the registration fees for the market. The market sponsor in question is a sustainable development company owned by Young and a couple of his friends. "We are investing in a couple of sustainable, local economy building community projects in the Bancroft area and investing in covering the market expense is a good investment to create something that is very important to us? a local sustainable economy," he says. Young says his company is called Ecostructure Canada (www.ecostructurecanada.com) and their development company is the Sustainable Development Company. He says it allows their vendors to have no fees for the market. So he invites any producer growing locally to come out and try the Farmers' Market, by reaching out to them on their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/bancroftfarmersmarket/). Or they can come to the market in person and get a registration form. "We're trying to bolster the local economy and give people awareness to fill the local market with their products. We're trying to attract more farmers right now. We have a core group of around six producers but I'd love to see 10 or 12. Even if you have a small home garden with a

little excess come and dip your toes, see if people are buying it, and make some extra money. I'm just trying to create a situation where people are encouraged to grow food so they can have a place to sell it and get some side income," he says. One of the vendors that had a stall there that rainy May 20 morning was Virginia Sweets Bakery (www.facebook.com/virginiasweetsbakery/). Kim says that her daughter Virginia is a new participant for 2023 and thinks that it's fantastic the market is back this year. "So this is her first year. She's a professional baker and she's decided to go out on her own and start her own business," she says. Virginia says that she's happy to be there and that things are going relatively well. "I've never done a market before, so this is new territory, exciting territory. It was a little stressful this morning, trying to figure it out and get everything here. But now we're good and next week will be even better!" she says. After the market, on May 21, Young told Bancroft This Week that the first market of the season went really well. "[We] probably had a couple hundred customers come through and all the vendors were really happy to be back."