

MAKING LUBBOCK LOCAL

With the smell of fresh vegetables in the crisp morning air, the sun is coming up on a Lubbock Saturday morning. The downtown sidewalk, which had been bustling with traffic the day before, now sits quiet with tents spread out, awaiting the customers who will soon be arriving.

This may just be any normal Saturday for some, but for Larry Simmons this Saturday marks the beginning of what he hopes to be a successful farmer's market season in order to recover from last year's drought.

He takes a deep breath and looks around at the vendors setting up their tables with hope in his heart and a good feeling about the day's event.

"I just felt like it was going to be a success," Simmons said. "There was a very positive vibe about it that morning."

He could not have been more right. All of the hard work and effort leading up to that day paid off, with a turnout that even he was surprised by. Approximately 1800 people attended the Lubbock Downtown Farmer's Market on July 14, 2012, with most of the vendors selling out of everything they brought. This marked the first day the Downtown Farmer's Market has been back since it took a hard hit from the drought in 2011. They lost a lot of their growers, which Simmons said hurt the farmer's market since the fresh vegetables are what drive a lot of the regular traffic.

The very first Downtown Farmer's Market was held in April of 2009 with 18 vendors and 400 people in attendance, and has been steadily growing since. When the event started it was only

held one Saturday a month and had remained that way until July of 2012. They were then able to increase it to two Saturdays every month, due to the large number of growers wanting to sell their fresh produce at the market.

Mixed vegetables are not the only item vendors are selling at the farmer's market, as some would come to expect by its name.

On the second and fourth Saturday of every month, customers at the downtown market can find a number of different local goods, including homemade jams and jellies, pies, breads, sausage, free range grass-fed beef, wood-fired pizza, chili dogs, fully dressed chickens and rabbits, decorative plants and artwork. Another new addition to the market, which has been eagerly received, is the sale of goose, chicken and duck eggs.

The farmer's market is being well-received, with many in the community saying it brings an Austin-feel to the Lubbock area.

This is satisfying to Simmons, who has said the reason they host the event is for the Lubbock community.

"You can shake hands with the guy who fixes your car, but you can't always shake hands with the guy who grows your food," Simmons said. "This event gives people the opportunity to talk to the farmer. Now that is reassuring to people." 

