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Tukwila Village Farmers Market 2023 Report

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Summary

The 2023 farmers market was by far our most successful season to date. We first opened in 2018 as a single farm stand and expanded to a farmers' market in 2019. Every year, the farmers market has continued to grow in size as well as scope of resources provided to address the rising food security needs of the community. Last year we had a total of five vendors, and this year we were honored to have been able to double our vendors to bring us up to a total of ten vendors. We had 8 fruit and vegetable vendors, and 2 jewelry



crafters present for the season, and we hope to continue to grow not only the size of the market, but also the scope of what we can offer at the market in the future.

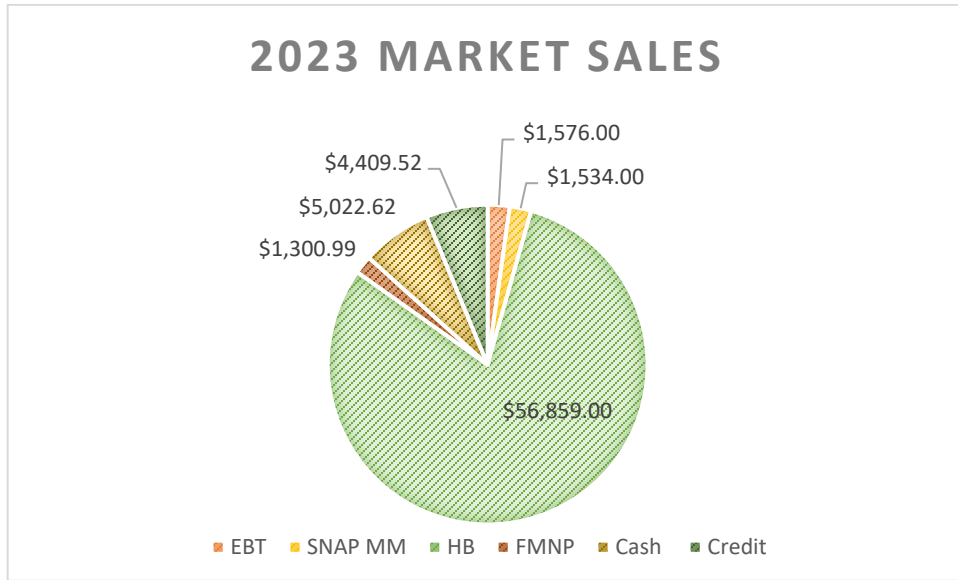
2023 Market Snapshot

- 21 market days - June 21st-November 8th
- 63% increase in all vendor sales from 2022
- 30% decrease in EBT sales
- 33% decrease in SNAP Market Match sales
- 96% increase in Heart Bucks sales
- 500 families utilized Heart Bucks (add number of individuals)
- 956 summer meals provided

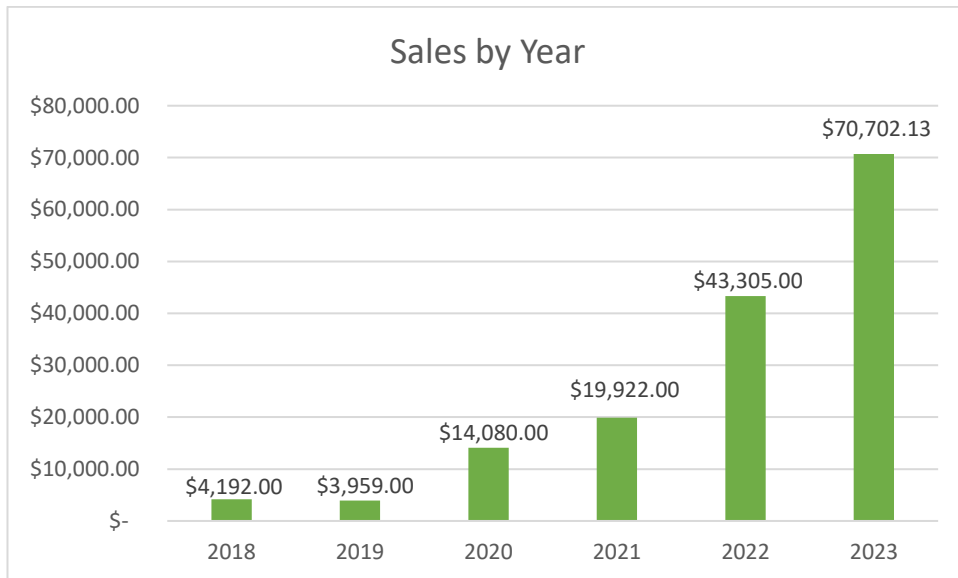
2023 Market Sales

For this season, we opened on June 21st and operated every Wednesday until November 8th. We were open from 4-7pm throughout the season but adjusted our hours in October to fit the

changing weather and community needs and were open from 4-6pm for the last few weeks of the season. We were open for a total of 21 weeks, and we were grateful to be able to remain open the entire season uninterrupted, unlike the last few years when we had to close due to high levels of smoke and air pollution in the area. Total sales were over \$72,700—a 96% increase from 2022. Over 87% of sales were through food security incentives—EBT, SNAP Market Match, Senior and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program benefits, and most importantly, Heart Bucks.



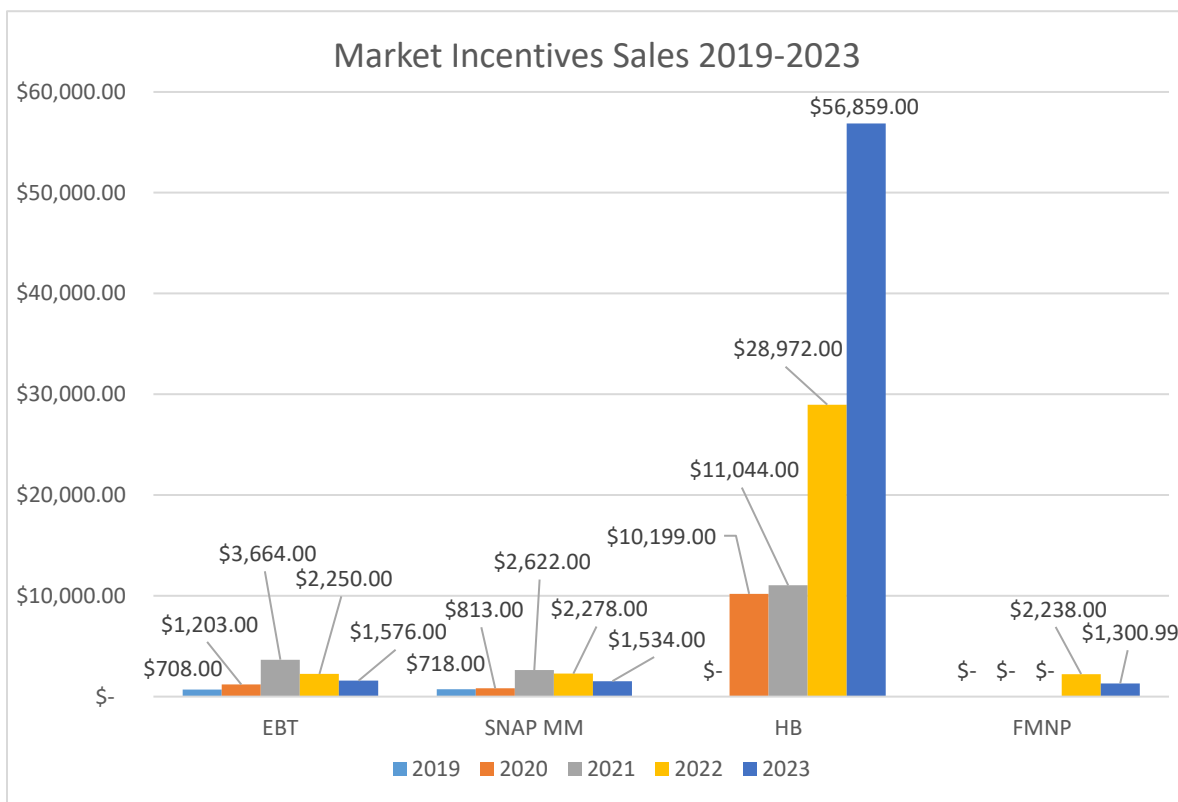
* Senior and WIC FMNP sales were only accepted at 2 booths: Wendi Farm and Namuna Garden, as they were the only two vendors to be approved through the state to accept these checks.



* Cash and credit sales in previous years were not information that was collected from other vendors and play a huge part in total sales numbers this year and in 2022.

This year, we were able to expand the market in numerous ways. The first way we expanded was through recruiting additional vendors to be at the market. We welcomed two fruit vendors, Fruitful Means and Wendi Farms, to provide delicious seasonal fruit from Eastern Washington for customers to purchase, as well as for our summer meals program. We also welcomed Kezama, a group of 4 women from East Africa working together to farm fresh produce at the Horseneck farm located in Kent. Additionally, we had two jewelry vendors, a corn vendor, and our wonderful farmers from previous years.

We have been extremely fortunate this year to be able to continue our partnership with Northwest Harvest and the American Heart Association to provide over \$57,000 in Heart Bucks to our community members facing food insecurity. This year we were able to secure a larger funding source that allowed us to distribute \$40 dollars a month to families of 3 or less, and \$80 to families of 4 or more, and provided funds on a monthly basis to over 500 families. This not only allowed us to increase the amount given to families, but it also allowed us to provide financial support to vendors via an expanded customer base. This year, we received a total of \$61,270 in incentives (Heart Bucks, EBT, SNAP Market Match and Senior/WIC FMNP), which is almost double the number of incentives that we received last year!



*This graph shows the sales growth for the EBT, SNAP Market Match and Heart Bucks incentives as well as FMNP over the last 5 years. There were no Heart Bucks in 2019 and no FMNP until 2022 so growth is compared between data for years applicable.

This season, we only issued \$1,605 in EBT, compared to the \$2,255 issues in 2022. For SNAP Market Match dollars, we distributed \$1,600 since SNAP Market Match benefits are always

issued with EBT tokens up to \$25 per person per day. The SNAP Market Match program is a program funded through the Washington State Department of Health and is meant to promote and incentivize folks receiving EBT benefits to buy fresh, local produce from local farmers markets. We received \$1,576 in EBT and \$1,534 in SNAP Market Match sales. We saw a 30% decrease in EBT sales and a 33% decrease in SNAP Market Match sales this year, which caused us to speculate to what the cause could be. It was seen in other markets as well that EBT and Snap Market Match usage was lower than they have seen in the last few years, and a few explanations could be possible. One explanation is that many folks are not receiving EBT benefits this year to the extent they were in the last few years, due to the discontinuation of the P-EBT benefits. For our market specifically, it is speculated that because we offer other incentives, such as the Heart bucks, folks are more reluctant to use their EBT benefits at the market and prefer to use those benefits at other grocery stores to purchase other items not provided at the farmers market. It would be beneficial to continue to collect data in the next few years to really be able to analyze what the causes are and how we can work to make a change or provide education around utilizing EBT and Snap Market Match at farmers markets in the future.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Amount EBT issued	\$820	\$1308	\$3,817	\$2,255	\$1,605
Amount EBT collected (sales)	\$790.50	\$1,203	\$3,664	\$2,250	\$1,576
Amount SNAP Market Match issued	\$818	\$1308	\$3,817	\$2,255	\$1,600
Amount SNAP/ Market Match collected (sales)	\$790	\$813	\$2,662	\$2,278	\$1,534
Total # of EBT transactions	99	86	199	120	104
Average # of transaction per market day	6	5	12	6	5
Community meals	N/A	N/A	680	1,228	580
Summer Meals	N/A	N/A	N/A	730	956

Survey Results and Customer Feedback

This past season, we were not able to get surveys out to the public regarding the market specifically. Instead, we conducted surveys during the summer meals portion of the market to engage community in their thoughts on the summer meals program, and the convenience of it being at the market. Although we didn't receive many survey responses, the ones that we did receive were positive. Many folks enjoyed having free meals onsite at the market, especially families with children. We also provided small incentives for any summer meal participant under the age of 18 for continuous engagement. We were able to offer free water bottles, stress balls

and frisbees on the 1st, 4th and 7th visit for some of the youth by utilizing a punch card system. We were also fortunate enough to be able to conduct a raffle on the last day of summer meals to one lucky participant to receive an iPad that was sponsored through the American Heart Association.

Through verbal conversations with market customers, we did receive positive feedback about having additional vendors at the market this year. On the flip side, we also received some commentary about bringing in other non-produce vendors such as a bread vendor, pastries, hot food, and even other craft artisans. This is something that we will continue to keep in the back of our minds as we continue to expand our market in the next few years.

Logistics and Coordination

This year we did not need to have a COVID safety plan in place, which allowed us to continue to expand our market physically. We also hosted our second year of summer meals at the Sullivan Center, so we naturally had more staff on site, along with Heart Bucks distribution. The distribution was led by our wonderful Community Health Workers, and the amazing FIN team, who really helped us push the money out to the community, which allowed for financial expansion amongst our vendors as well.



Another great thing we were able to coordinate this year was the market kickoff celebration on the first day of the market. This celebration was hosted through our partnership with the American Heart Association, and really allowed for us to celebrate the start of summer, the start of the market season, and being able to gather with community in a beautiful way. We had music on site, free food for folks to sample the summer meals menu, activities, and a raffle. This event was monumental in gathering interest from the community and creating excitement around the opening of the market and summer meals site. We are honored to have been able to host the event and hope to be able to continue to find innovative ways to engage the community in meaningful ways.

This season we hosted 21 markets and were able to expand it by an extra two weeks by utilizing the indoor space at the Sullivan Center. We had already established the end of October as our original closing date, but with demand from the farmers and the community, we decided to expand for two more weeks in November, which brought our closing date to November 8th. This has shown us how unpredictable each season may be, and how we may need to continue to create a flexible end date for the market to continue to meet the demand of the vendors and the community.

Market Expansion

Over the last few years, we have continued to see the market expand and grow, and this last season was no different. Last year, we had the privilege of expanding from 4 vendors to 5, which allowed us to hit the 5-vendor minimum threshold for Washington farmers Market Association membership. WSFMA have been a wonderful resource and have worked alongside us to ensure that we reach the minimum threshold, especially given that the majority of our operating years have been during Covid.

This past season we were able to expand to twice the size of last year, hosting 10 vendors at our market. Each week we had Du Monde, Fruitful Means, Kezama, Namuna Garden and New Roots. We also had Heu's Blooms and greens join us in July, along with Wendi Farms, Sweet Krazy Korn, and two other jewelry vendors. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to expand our market and hope to continue to expand over the next few years to bring on different types of vendors that will meet the growing needs of our customers and community.

As mentioned previously, we hosted 21 market days this season. Our original market end date was scheduled for October 25th, but we were very honored to have been able to expand for an additional 2 weeks through utilizing the indoor space at the Sullivan center. The indoor space was also used a few weeks prior to the end of the season to accommodate for the shortened days and impending cold weather. We saw that utilizing the indoor space and adjusting the hours by shifting the start time to 3pm instead of 4pm really helped the vendors and the customers so that we were done before dark. We are also grateful that we didn't have any unusual weather, like high levels of smoke, as we did in previous years, and we are hoping to be able to continue to utilize the indoor space at the Sullivan Center for any future market expansions and for any bad weather days that we can accommodate for.

Food Access

This year we were extremely grateful to continue our current food access programs and expand in a couple of ways. Our biggest program to date is our farmers market and Heart Bucks voucher program. We were able to secure additional funding this year, which ultimately brought in over \$57,000 to community members' hands, and in turn, into the hands of our vendors. We also operated our second year of summer meals, which allowed us to serve over 900 meals to youth and their families. The meals were all culturally diverse, and inclusive of varying dietary needs, including halal and vegetarian requests. We were also able to provide free community meals from the beginning of the year through the end of August, which allowed us to connect with community members who may not be directly tied to Global to Local or to our programs at Food Innovation network. Some of our partners included Partners in Employment, SHAG, IRC, and Puget Sound All Stars.

As touched upon above, a major aspect of food access that we were able to expand was our Heart Bucks program. Over the last 4 years, we have seen the levels of food insecurity rise and have really been able to see how the Heart Bucks program has really made an impact. The impact was on both the community members and our amazing vendors. We went from \$10,000 in vouchers, to over \$17,500 in 2021, \$40,000 in 2022, and this past season we were able to go up to \$57,000 in total vouchers. This money not only affords the community members the

ability to purchase locally grown, fresh produce but it also provides an economic opportunity for our local BIPOC, refugee and immigrant farmers who are just beginning their journey as farm businesses here in South King County, This shows that the need is there and as long as we can continue to provide vouchers and programs that address the real needs of our community, the more we can thrive together!

Things to Improve or Change for 2024

This year, we received extra funding to secure the continuation of our Heart Bucks program. Through the partnership with Northwest Harvest, we received a total of \$40,000 to utilize for Heart Bucks and we also received an additional \$7,000 through the American Heart Association and another \$12,000 through International Rescue Committee. With the additional funds and expanding of our program, we saw that additional staffing was needed to ensure smooth operations, especially during distribution. Moving forward, we are exploring other options for distribution, especially thinking about congestion at the market and how to alleviate some of the foot traffic around distribution at the market.

Other FIN Successes!

This year, we continued existing partnerships for meals with Sustainable Housing for Aging Generations (SHAG), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Partners In Employment (PIE), as well as connecting with Puget Sound Afterschool Allstars program to provide free meals for their family wellness events hosted at 3 local middle schools in South King County. Although we had to stop our community meals program in September, we were able to distribute over 6,000 community meals and supported the Spice Bridge vendors to bring in over \$64,000 from community meals alone. We are hoping to restart meals in 2024 with expanded capacity and with diverse funding sources in place to ensure continuity and sustainability.

In March 2023, we started the Spice Bridge Art Night series, featuring local refugee and immigrant youth poets sharing their wonderfully crafted poetry and artistic pieces. We honored Women's history month, Visions of Voices and Peace, honored Asian and Pacific Islander heritage month, celebrated world Refugee Day, and even hosted youth poet laureate and had local artists join us for guided workshops hosted at the farmers market.

Lastly, in the fall and winter of 2023 we were afforded the opportunity to welcome our newest cohort to the Business Incubator program. We are honored to welcome five new businesses, offering a host of delicious foods from Caribbean foods to Mexican delicacies. We look forward to getting them started in early Spring of 2024!



We are fortunate to be able to continue to grow our programming and scope and can't wait to see what amazing things we will continue to do in 2024!