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Our View: Money

One shopper at a time: Peach Street Market aims to offer organic produce for weekly pickup

Peach Street Market hopes to entice customers to eat healthfully with organic produce



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Hannah Ancel
ACCESS Community Food System Coordinator

By Greg Stiles
Mail Tribune

Posted May. 28, 2015 at 6:01 PM
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Peach Street Market & Deli operates in what federal agencies classify as a food desert, beyond walking distance of a full-service grocery store.

Owner Nancy Murrish settled into the west Medford location more than 20 years ago and has a well-established clientele. Like most mom-and-pop operators, however, providing fresh produce has been't viable.

"The people who live around here aren't used to buying fresh vegetables and fruit," Murrish says. "They're more likely to buy Twinkies."

She's hoping to change those habits, even if it's one shopper at a time.

In collaboration with Wandering Roots Farm and ACCESS Inc., Peach Street Market plans to soon offer pre-ordered organic produce to its customers on a weekly basis. On Thursday afternoon, Murrish was signing up regulars and neighbors for organic produce buys, including customers on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

"We have a community here, and I care about the neighborhood," says Murrish, who lives in back of her store. "You can do stuff to make your neighborhood better, or do nothing. I love my

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Washington Elementary School third-grader Kambri Alger samples fried rice with fresh Wandering Roots vegetables prepared by Hilary Kemmling in front of the Peach Street Market Thursday. Mail Tribune / Bob Pennell

community and love the neighborhood."

She discovered Wandering Roots Farm, an organic operation outside Gold Hill, last summer at the Rogue Valley Growers & Crafters Market and was quickly sold.

"I bought their produce at the farmers market all last summer," Murrish says. "It lasted a long time on the counter and I didn't have to refrigerate it."

The 1,000-square-foot store is neither a convenience store nor a grocery store, Murrish says. "I call it a mom and pop with no meat and limited produce."

Wandering Roots will provide a list of available produce and Murrish will distribute the weekly offering to customers via email and compile the orders. Jeff and Anna Boesch will deliver the orders to Peach Street, where the veggies will be kept in a refrigerator provided by ACCESS for next-day pickup.

Opening the door to people who rarely eat organic produce is attractive to Anna Boesch.

"As a farm operation, we want to diversify our outlets as much as possible," she says. "We do four farmers markets a week, but this is the first healthy eating initiative we've been involved in. If this works out, it would be an awesome outlet as well."

Hannah Ancel, ACCESS Community Food System coordinator, says growers and neighborhood markets can both benefit from such a program.

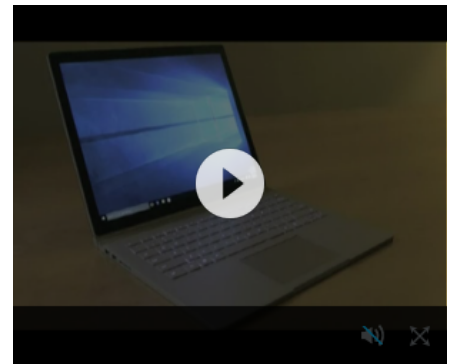
"One of the challenges for getting fresh fruit to stores like Peach Street is that they don't move a lot of produce," Ancel says. "This way, farmers aren't harvesting a bunch of stuff that isn't sold and it isn't as much of a risk for a small store."

After Foodland closed more than a decade ago at a site several blocks to the south on Stewart Avenue, Murrish says, she was approached about relocating her store there.

"The rent they wanted there was extraordinary," she says. "They wanted \$10,000 per month."

Murrish preferred staying in her community, which she describes as bounded by 11th Street to

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Stewart Avenue, north to south, and between King and Hamilton streets, east to west. Last week, she distributed fliers door-to-door in that area, inviting people to Thursday's event put on by ACCESS, the Oregon State University Extension Service and Jackson County Public Health to promote Go 4 Real Food.

Murrish isn't sure when she will place the first order, but hopes to start soon.

"We've had a breakdown in our food system," Murrish says. "I want to see people around here start eating healthy food."

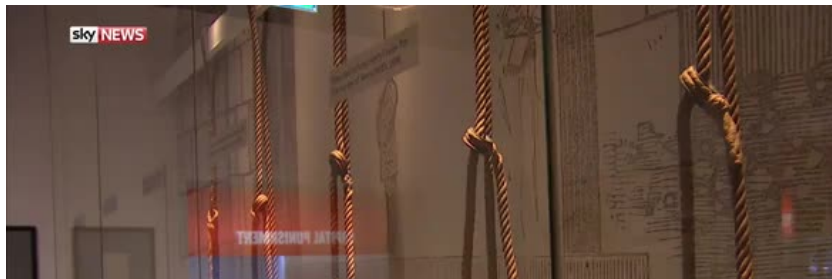
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