



## **2012 Annual Report**

### **Foothills Farmers' Market, Inc.**

This year marked Foothills Farmers' Market's fifth season of operation. Our 2012 season produced significant growth and positive change. We started the year by hiring Donald Elick as new market manager. Donald provided effective leadership to market operations, new insight into social media marketing, and fresh energy and enthusiasm to the local food movement.

We completed the final phases of a grant project funded by the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion program, which allocated \$45,746 to a broad range of marketing and promotions activities. These included signs, billboards, banners, brochures, website upgrades, print ads, restaurant table toppers, post cards, advertising benches, documentary film screenings, and electronic customer newsletters. Our grant-funded efforts heightened visibility for Foothills Farmers' Market and led to the following achievements:

- Increasing customer foot traffic and creating additional product demand led to a 118% increase in the number of farmers and home-based business entrepreneurs selling at Foothills Farmers' Market. Vendor participation grew from 33 vendors to 72 vendors at the completion of the project.
- Nearly thirty (30) new products were added to market inventory, including heirloom varieties, specialty crops, and value-added foods.
- Average total sales per vendor increased from \$1,447.18 in 2011 to \$3,475.04 in the 2012 market season, a 240% increase.
- Estimated total sales grew from \$84,000 in 2009 to \$250,200 in 2012.
- 87.5% of vendors surveyed indicated that resulting growth of the market allowed them to diversify their product line and grow their business.

Live music and chef demonstrations were used to make farmers' market shopping and more pleasant and educational experience. We continued our efforts to combat food insecurity in Cleveland County. Vendors donated 1,544 pounds of surplus food through Farmer Foodshare, which distributed it to organizations that feed the hungry in our local community. Our Community Math Academy Project provided an opportunity for approximately 100 students attending Cleveland County's Community Math Academy to practice their math skills while learning about locally-grown foods and the importance of giving back to the community.

A new cross-promotional partnership was created with Pleasant City Wood Fired Grille in Uptown Shelby. The restaurant purchased local food ingredients from market vendors and incorporated them into "Farmers' Market Specials" every Saturday for 18 weeks during peak market season. The project provided the impetus for increasing local food sales to other food service establishments, and generated \$3,600 additional income for farmers.

Fundraising for the farmers' market shade pavilion continued, with major gifts received from USDA Community Facilities Program (\$49k), USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant (\$75k), Raper-Roark Trust Fund (\$5k), Electricities (\$4k), Uptown Shelby Association (\$7.5k), USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program (\$34k), Dover Foundation (\$5k), and Carolina Farm Credit (\$5k).