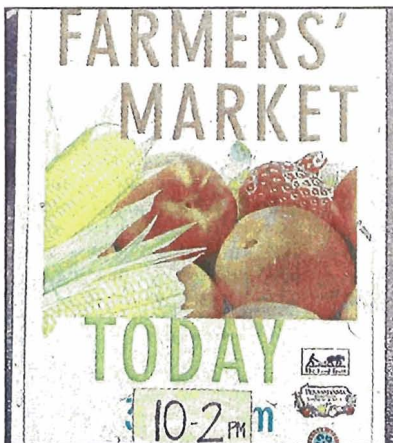


# MAIN LINE TIMES

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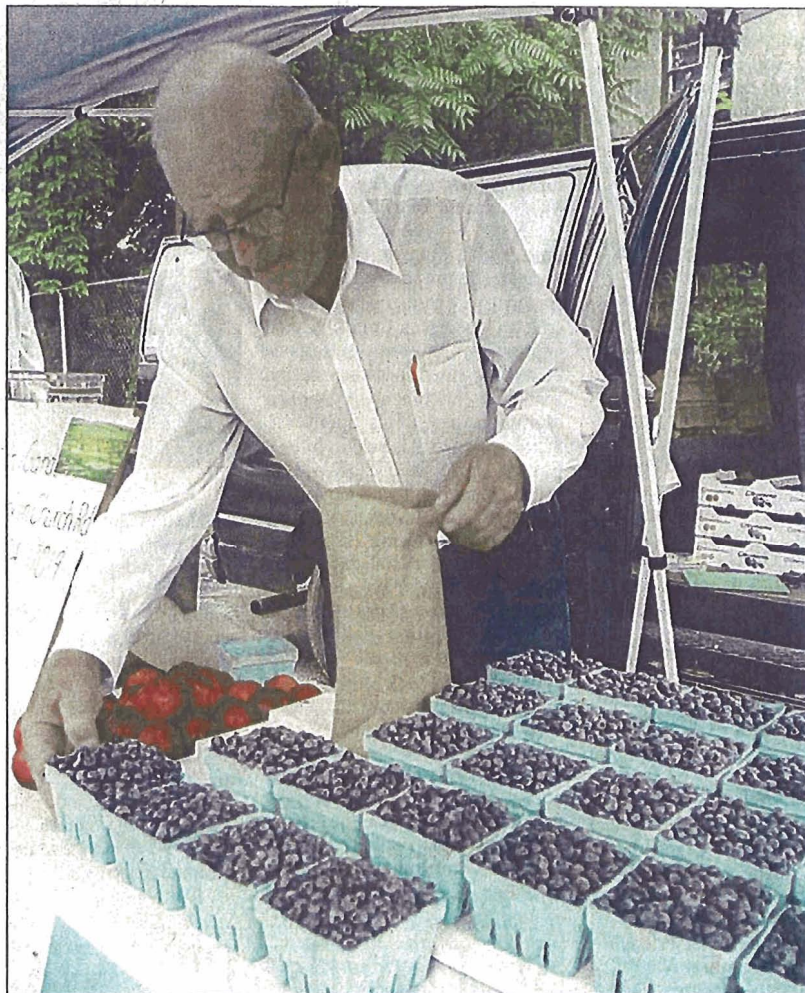
## Farmers' markets bring bounty to city



By RICHARD ILGENFRITZ

**OVERBROOK** - Like fresh tomatoes, sweet corn and plump strawberries that rise from the soil, farmers' markets have been sprouting up in and around the Main Line this summer. Organizers say their goal is to make nutritious food more accessible, thereby encouraging healthier eating habits.

Recently, a new market has taken root on an asphalt parking lot near the Overbrook train station just east of City



JON NIMERFROH/Main Line Times

**Daniel Kraybill places plump, fresh blueberries on display at his Overbrook Farmers' Market stand. The outdoor market is open Saturdays through October and is among about a dozen such markets aimed at bringing fresh produce to urban areas.**

Avenue. The Overbrook Farms Farmers' Market runs every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will be open into October.

The Food Trust, a non-profit organization that works to ensure access to affordable and nutritious food, organized the market.

"We're getting a very positive response from the community," said Maddie Chera of Bryn Mawr, who works with the Food Trust and manages the Overbrook Market. "We've gotten a lot of regular customers over the past few weeks."

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# Market brings farm to city, suburban folks

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Currently, the Overbrook market only has four vendors. But those farmers are bringing a variety of products ranging from fresh fruits and vegetables to breads and other baked goods.

"The whole idea behind our organization is to get access for everyone to healthy food," Chera said.

Nicky Uy, project manager of the Farmers Market Program for the Food Trust, said she believes that although the Overbrook market is a bit small, it should grow.

"I think it will grow as long as the local community continues to support it," Uy said.

Since the market sits at the confluence of several communities, said Uy, it should draw from all of the areas. The market sits where Overbrook and Overbrook Farms meet on the Philadelphia side and near where Merion and Wynneford meet on the Lower Merion side. It's a short distance from the communities of Penn Wynne, Havertown, Bala Cynwyd and Wynnefield.

Saturdays are a difficult day for recruiting farmers, since there already are many markets in eastern Pennsylvania competing for their time, but Uy still expects more farmers to be attracted to the market.

Within the next couple of weeks, she thinks another vendor or two may be willing to set up shop at the Overbrook Farmers Market. Those new farmers could add such items as cheeses and flowers.

Uy thinks she can recruit more farmers to the Overbrook Farms area because of the large number of farms located just a short distance away. Some of that farmland is just a few miles from the western end of the Main Line in Chester and Lancaster counties.

"We really live close to some of the best farmland in America," Uy said.

Among the local farmers is Mitch Shapiro, owner of the Vital Force Farm in Landenberg, Chester County. Shapiro, who is in his late 50s, said he recently took up farming as a career after being in the medical profession for many years.

"Growing for a market like this is rewarding," Shapiro said. "Let's face it, even if you start off with a fresh vegetable somewhere in California, by the time it gets to distributor by truck and then gets to the East Coast distributor, it can take a week or more before it

gets to the store before you eat it."

Shapiro came to last Saturday's market with jalapeno peppers, tomatoes, Middle Eastern squash, corn and zucchinis to sell.

"We started growing things and then we began looking for a market. That's when we found out about this new market," Shapiro said.

Like the people at the Food Trust, Shapiro said he is also interested in the health benefits of bringing fresh foods to the marketplace.

"This is a health project," Shapiro said. "It's bringing... the nutrients right to the customer."

According to Uy, the Food Trust has helped organize about 30 farmers markets throughout the Philadelphia region since the program began in 1992.

"The whole idea behind our organization is to get access for everyone to healthy nutrition, to healthier food," Uy said.

Joseph Christophel came with products from two family farms in Dillsburg, York County and another farm in Biglerville, Adams County.

"We depend on the quality to speak for itself," Christophel said about the products at his stand - fresh blueberries, peaches, apples, strawberries and other fruits.

"We're trying to bring healthy food and food access to people who are underserved as a community builder," said Ginny Duerr, a representative of Overbrook Farms Civic Association, which helped organize the market.

According to Duerr, in the coming weeks, they plan to host free discussions at the market on topics such as healthy food for lunch boxes.

The Overbrook Farms Farmers Market is located on the Philadelphia side of City Avenue on 63rd Street, between East Wynneford Road and the SEPTA R-5 tracks. The market sits back off the main street in a parking lot a short distance from the Overbrook train station between Sherwood Road and Overbrook Avenue.

Other nearby markets organized by the Food Trust include Lansdowne on Lansdowne Avenue between Baltimore Pike and Stewart Avenue, which operates Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and Conshohocken at Fayette and West Hector streets. The Conshohocken market runs Fridays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



JON NIMERFROH/Main Line Times

(Clockwise from top right) Basil Weiner of Vital Force Farms in Landenberg sets up a display of fresh corn. Families stroll past the stands of fresh baked breads and locally grown fruits and vegetables, including nectarines. Hugh Nicholson, 2, of Overbrook, snacks on a fresh nectarine, and Elliott McAteer, 3, of Philadelphia, helps his mom pick out fresh produce.