



P.O. Box 133
Whiting, Kansas 66552
(785) 873-3431
FAX (785)- 873-3432
E-mail: ksrc@rainbowtel.net
Website: www.kansasruralcenter.org

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785-840-6202 or Mercedes.taylorpuckett@gmail.com

The 4M's of Market Management Shared at Farmers' Market Conference

Topeka - Keeping an eye on the 4Ms of market management—mission, management, marketing and measurement—allows farmers markets to grow and thrive in a sustainable fashion.

Demand for local foods and for markets has rapidly increased in the past four years, so much so that farmers and markets are challenged to keep up with requests to expand. With few resources, both in terms of finances and staff time, markets should approach each new venture with a critical eye.

This was the message shared by Darlene Wolnik, Director of Marketshare at marketumbrella.org, in New Orleans, Louisiana, at the 2010 Kansas Farmers Market Conference for Organizers. Darlene was a Crescent City Farmers Market shopper and volunteer before joining the organization in 2002. She provides technical assistance to markets in the New Orleans region and beyond and helps create new tools to build and maintain successful markets.

To illustrate the 4Ms approach, Wolnik walked organizers through the process of evaluating a potential opportunity: adding a new market day using the 4 M's:

Does our mission encourage this?

Can we afford staff for this?

Who should we discuss this with?

What is success?

More than twenty markets from across Kansas were represented by forty attendees at the day-long event on February 1. The morning was devoted to exchanging information and developing relationships among markets. Key areas of discussion included issues of risk management and liability reduction, expansion and promotion of farmers market EBT programs as well as launching a new market.

Wolnik also provided organizers the opportunity to develop Market Portraits, a short survey of operational attributes of a market. A follow-up report will be distributed to each market enabling organizers to discover peers across the state and nation.

The Kansas Farmers Market Conference was presented by the Kansas Rural Center's Farmers Market Project with support from a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant.

Additional sponsors included the Kansas Department of Commerce, Rural Development; the Farmers Market Coalition; the Downtown Lawrence Farmers' Market; and the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops. For more information contact Mercedes Taylor-Puckett at 785-840-6202, or Mercedes.taylorpuckett@gmail.com . -30-