



Ewart Farmers Market

ANGELA HUNTER
PROMOTES LOCAL FOOD
AND COMMUNITY IN
DOWNTOWN EVART

Photos and Story by Phil Eich,
Storyville Social, as part of the
Michigan Main Street Story
Series

When you come to the Ewart Farmers Market, you're gonna see the whole street lined up with produce vendors, then the second row has our artisans—ours is a makers' market. We have probably close to 25 vendors out here. The atmosphere is phenomenal. It's grown from seven or eight vendors to 30 during COVID. Every year it gets a little bit bigger and more people notice, and then more of the bigger vendors want to come and participate. That's big stuff when people start coming to you! That's when you know that you're on the right track.

Farmers markets bring local fresh food to the community. It seems like we're getting more and more people coming to buy fresh produce because it tastes so much better, and in

my opinion, it's also a lot cheaper. We're helping the community and we're helping those farmers. That's what a farmers market is all about—helping people.

Farmers markets give people better access to healthy foods and a place to come and spend their dollars locally. We have programs such as Double Up Food Bucks, which allows people with an EBT Bridge Card to get double the fresh fruits and vegetables. Markets give the chance for the community to even come out and sell their stuff, and it's a place for families to come and sit and have a picnic.

But when growing a farmers market, it's important to follow best practices for food safety. A lot of people think that 'if you

make it, you can sell it', but that's not true.

I'm a big believer in doing it right and having the Cottage Food Law being number one in our market. Quite simply, if you made it in your home kitchen and you need to refrigerate it, you can't sell it here. But there are also a lot of other foods that are not allowed, such as pepper jelly, pickles and apple butter. I think every market needs to have rules and be consistent with everything they do. I've had a few vendors tell me they like how it's managed here because they know what to expect.

I try to screen vendors before they come in, so we don't oversaturate. When I look at my market, I don't want to have 10 different maple syrup vendors. I don't want to have 10 different honey vendors. Nobody is going to make any money and customers are looking for a variety. I will not say 'no' to a farmer, but, for example, I've had to turn away other vendors who sell maple syrup or honey because it's not fair to the vendor we already have. I'm out to help everybody make money, and sometimes saying 'no' can free up a vendor to spend their time at a

market where they'll be more successful.

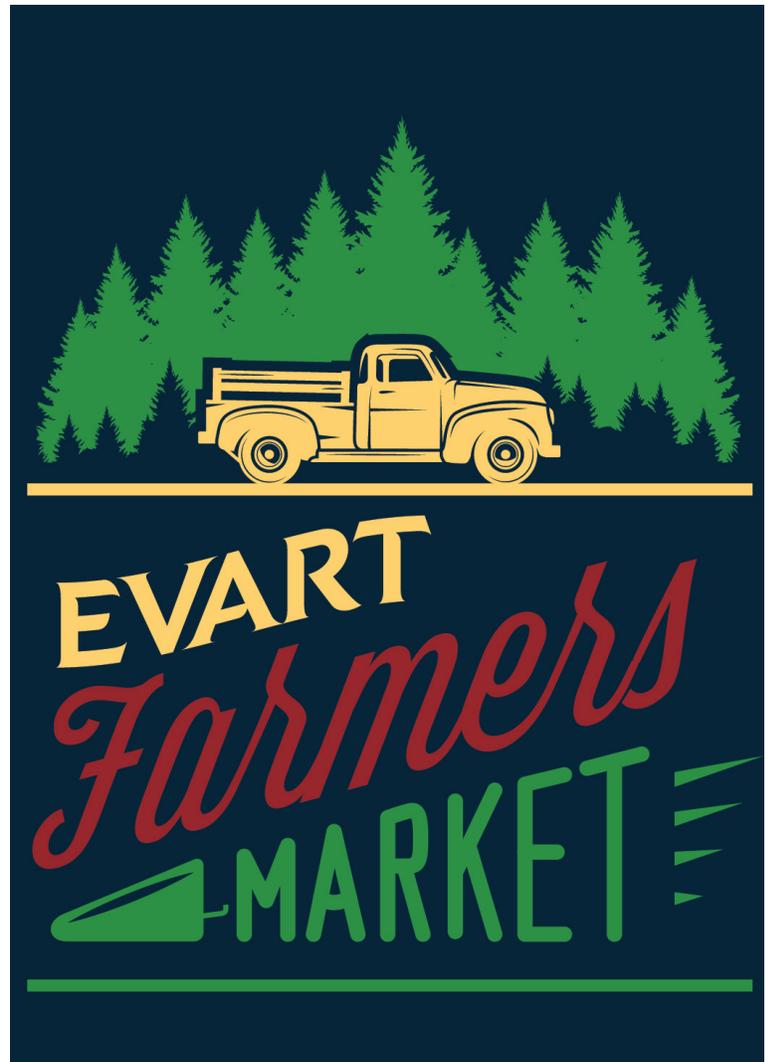
I started coming to the Evert farmers market in 2016—I really didn't realize we even had one until then! I had a friend who was a market manager, and I thought, 'I could do this!' I just went into it part time in 2016, became full-time in 2017, and I've been doing it ever since.

To become a certified market manager, you go through a Michigan Farmers Market Association—MIFMA—class, where you learn all the dos and don'ts of being a manager. They give you resources, such as where to find grants, where to go for licensing, and what you can do better with your market. They help to promote the food programs we have in our market as well.

The vendors are my family. We all know what it takes to keep this market going. I love them. I'm just really passionate about this farmers market. I'm not doing it for the kudos or anything else—it just makes me feel good.

—Angela Hunter, Certified Market Manager, Evert Farmers Market

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