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# 'Super first day' for farmer's market

By LANE WALLACE  
STAFF WRITER

Except for some lengthy traffic jams, the downtown Watsonville farmer's market opened to rave reviews last night.

"It was a super first day," said John Lange, a Salinas grower who sold everything he brought — 20 flats of strawberries, six flats of raspberries, and several boxes of garlic.

Laura Frise, who sold virtually all the broccoli, lettuce and artichokes she brought from her farm near Castroville, said she did better than expected. "Next week I'm bringing my husband" to help, she said.

Other vendors, customers and organizers were similarly pleased with the event, which drew a growing crowd to the closed-off 300 block of Main Street, Peck Street and the City Plaza. Plans call for the event to be held weekly until the rainy season.

When the market opened at 5 p.m., about 100 people were milling around the booths. The crowd grew steadily, reaching a peak of about 600 by 6:30 p.m.

By that time, small groups were gathered around all 14 booths, looking over the produce and flowers and talking to the farmers.

For those who wanted a break from shopping, there was a country music band, a magician and juggler. The hungry lined up at the Watsonville Band's food booth on Peck Street.

"It's excellent," said City Councilman Joe Marsano, who was carrying several bags of fruit and vegetables. The produce sold in stores has sometimes been in cold storage, Marsano said. "You know you're getting fresh stuff here," he said. "I'm ready to come back."

When the market opened, most of the customers were downtown workers who had just gotten off work. Later on, whole families came. The vendors said most of the people they talked to were Pajaro Valley residents.

The market is "certified," meaning all those selling must have grown it themselves.

"I'm thrilled. I hope it gets bigger," said Barbara Hammond of Pajaro Dunes, who was shopping with her daughter, Susan, who lives in Aptos.

After she finished buying food, Hammond said, she was going shopping at Ford's and would eat dinner downtown.

"That's the point, isn't it?," she said, referring to

the fact that the Central Business Improvement District organized the market in an effort to bolster Thursday night business.

Cal Watkins, chairman of the market organizing committee, said reaching the goal of improving Thursday night business in the stores "will take a while."

Watkins, manager of J.C. Penney Co. in the 500 block of Main, said business in his store was average and seemed to be about the same in other shops he looked into.

Watkins, who had expected about 20 vendors yesterday, figures more will come in as crops mature in the next few weeks.

There were no tomatoes last night, nor Watsonville's mainstay — the apple. Those fruits are expected in the next few weeks.

"We'll also try to have more food booths," Watkins said.

The Watsonville market and one at Cabrillo College Saturday mornings shouldn't conflict, said Virginia Conde of Melody Ranch in Watson-

ville, who was selling her fruit, vegetables and flowers last night. She also sells at the market at Monterey Peninsula College on Thursday afternoons.

Conde and her daughter, Darlene Mora, said they saw only a few people last night that they see at the Cabrillo market.



Gretchen Regenhart buys flowers from Nick Pasqual while twins Elizabeth and Daniel relax.

Photos by Kurt Ellis

REFERENCE

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Kurt Ellison

Laura Frise (left) had all the customers she could handle at the farmer's market in Watsonville yesterday. See page 11 for story and more pictures.

to Watsonville to see how her daughter was doing. She found Mora had more business than one person could comfortably handle. "She was so glad to see me," Conde said.

Dee Dee Guinavan, of Glaum Egg Ranch in Aptos, said she "did very well," selling 200 dozen eggs last night, about half of what she did at Cabrillo Saturday.



Nikki Narver found some flowers to her liking.