Church Farmers’ Market Ministry Helps Vendors and Meets Community Food Needs

On May 13, New Highland Baptist Church (NHBC) in Hanover County opened its Farmers’ Market Ministry for its fourth season. “The mission of the NHBC Farmers’ Market is to help local growers and vendors, who grow or make their own products, connect with the community and provide fresh, locally-grown food,” said Buddy Johnson, church member and co-manager of the ministry. “The church is answering God’s call to practice environmental and resource stewardship by providing healthy food options and reducing the carbon footprint of what is consumed.”

New for 2015 is collaboration with Feed More, Central Virginia’s hunger-relief leader. Feed More includes the Central Virginia Food Bank, Meals on Wheels Serving Central Virginia, and the Community Kitchen.

The NHBC market is also one of the first markets to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. By expanding their marketing scope, they hope to double the customer base to provide more healthy food options to the community.
The idea for the farmers’ market ministry stemmed from a 2010 strategic plan in which church leaders were looking for ways to use the church’s resources to help the community. “There are a number of local farmers around us who sell items on the weekends in other markets,” explained Mike Sandridge, church member and co-manager of the market ministry. “However, this weekly opportunity will give them a mid-week option to sell their produce before the next weekend rolls around.”

For its initial season, the Dover Baptist Association awarded the ministry a grant to help with startup funds for signs and other advertising. Seven vendors are participating this year so far, and there is room for more who meet the market’s requirements, one of which is that every vendor must grow and make their own products. The market runs from May through September, every Wednesday, from 4:00–7:00 p.m.

For more information about outreach ideas for your church, contact:
Ken Kessler
Team Leader, Empowering Leaders Team
Baptist General Association of Virginia
800.255.2428, ext. 5295
ken.kessler@bgav.org

Ministries like this one are made possible by the generous Cooperative Missions gifts of Virginia Baptist churches affiliated with the Baptist General Association of Virginia. Read more Kingdom Stories at BGAV.org/blog.