



Ruth's Farmers' Market Opens for Pre-Qualified Farmers

The Farmer's Market at the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds will have a grand ribbon cutting ceremony on November 3, at 10:30 a.m. This project means a great deal to our community. It is an opportunity for our north end farmers to share their bounty with south end residents. Since the original pavilion was torn down at the Fairgrounds to build the Courthouse Annex, the farmers have brought their produce in what is effectively a carport, in the hot sun, with inadequate room for their produce. There was no running water or electricity. Many have refused to bring their produce.

The Farmer's Market is named for Ruth Clark, who has kept the market running for more than two decades. The name of Miss Ruth's Farmers' Market is a way to honor her life's work.

The new pole barn features 16 tables for vendors, running water, fans and is built to stand against the strongest weather. It has adequate parking and will continue the hours of Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays. In order to display produce, each vendor must make application through the Okaloosa Extension Office at 850-689-5850.

I want to thank my fellow Commissioners for agreeing that this was an important use of funding when there are many competing interests for this money. I sincerely want to thank the County Public Works Division and the Okaloosa County Extension Service for making this project a priority.

In closing, I will say that from my heart, this project means more to me than you can imagine. I watched the destruction of the old pole barn on the Fairgrounds many years ago. This is a project that is in the best interests of the citizens in Okaloosa County. Many of the mothers who use WIC coupons purchase healthy food at this market. The original fresh *Farm to Table produce program* brings in \$40,000 dollars to our county each year. This will bear unforeseen fruit for years to come (pun intended)!

Plan to attend the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and please bring a jar of peanut butter to donate to the County Extension Offices' "Feed the Hungry Drive."

It is a pleasure to serve as your County Commissioner. If I can assist you, please reach me at the below information.

My Sincere Thanks,
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