

OUR STORY

Those who helped get the market started in 1991 include Renfrow Hardware, Seeds of Hope Project, the Matthews Town Council, the Matthews Chamber of Commerce, a small Christian church and a few community farmers. The market was born in the green space beside Renfrow Hardware with a few local farmers selling their produce. David Blackley of Renfrow Hardware and the late Frank Renfrow provided the market free use of the site. Growth was slow, but gradually more vendors and customers were attracted to the fledgling market. When more parking became a necessity for our ever-growing market, David Blackley and Frank Renfrow made the grassy lot across Cotton Gin Alley available for our customers to use. Without that generosity of both men in so many ways, we doubt the market would have grown and thrived as successfully as it has.

In 1996, a partnership was formed between the market and the Matthews Chamber of Commerce that helped the market grow to the point where it could prosper on its own.

In 1999, Matthews Community Farmers Market, Inc. was founded as an independent non-profit corporation to run the market. It is composed of farmer members and governed by a board of directors elected from the market's active membership. The board assures the market remains true to its original mission and decides how the market should evolve to meet the needs of the vendors as well as the community it serves. The market manager/executive director supports the board in running day-to-day operations.

In 2007, a successful winter market was added, making the market a year-round operation, opening every Saturday morning except for the weekend after Thanksgiving.

In 2013 and 2014, the farmers' market site underwent a complete renovation. The Town of Matthews invested thousands of dollars to construct new front and rear entryways to the market. No sooner had that work been completed than a heavy snow collapsed many market tents. A tremendous outpouring of donations from market customers, chefs and other market supporters raised enough money to remake and upgrade the market site, tents and facilities.

In 2016 we celebrated our 25th anniversary by mounting a huge fundraising campaign that raised money to construct a new chef demo patio, water and drainage projects and adding a tailgate area in our parking lot on

Cotton Gin Alley. We are always seeking new ways to improve the market and so our electrical system underwent a significant upgrade to meet the needs of our vendors.

Now that the market has attained tax-exempt, non-profit status under s501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code, additional means of fundraising are at our disposal, facilitating further growth of the market.

Our story continues as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary in 2021.

Sidebar...

The Community House building is more than 100 years old and was once an open structure under which cotton farmers used to congregate while their cotton was being ginned? There used to be a cotton gin on the grassy lot the market now uses for parking (hence the street name Cotton Gin Alley). Eventually the open structure was closed in and used to house a cotton gin worker and his family. For several years it was rented by various businesses, until the farmers' market started using it to feature market information and sell market merchandise and cold beverages.