CONTACT

arcadiamobilemarket.org
IG: arcadiasmobilemarket
mobilemarket@arcadiafood.org
202-281-9835

ARCADIA’S MOBILE MARKET
2021 REVIEW
Arcadia’s Mobile Market was established in 2012 to improve access to local farm fresh food in underserved areas in Washington, DC. The Mobile Market offers food grown on Arcadia’s farm as well as several other local farms to offer a wide selection of produce, meat, eggs and more. The market is open to everyone, and food assistance recipients are incentivized to shop at the market through Arcadia’s matching program- doubling the value of SNAP, WIC and Senior FMNP checks.

Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture is on a mission to cultivate vibrant local food systems that prioritize health, equity, and sustainability, from the farm forward. Founded in 2010, Arcadia has four distinct programs: Sustainable Farm Production, Veteran Farmer Training, Youth and Adult Farm Education and the Mobile Market. All farm production and education programming is held at Arcadia’s Alexandria, VA farm. The Mobile Market is based in Northeast Washington, DC, close to the customers we serve.
Message From Arcadia’s Mobile Market Director

The 2021 mobile market season, like many aspects of life in year 2 of a global pandemic, was unpredictable and held unprecedented challenges, yet affirmed much of Arcadia’s philosophy - that food access must be convenient, reliable, and high quality; that the Mobile Markets are a transitional solution; and that permanent, community-backed brick and mortar groceries are necessary in all of the communities we continue to serve.

It is my hope to leverage what I’ve learned in the for-profit food sector to improve the Mobile Market’s operational efficiency to maximize our impact for customers. Because so many customers have been financially impacted by COVID-19, we examined and shifted our sourcing partners to offer staple items at a price drop from prior years, while still sourcing exclusively from local producers. With Andrea Neaf’s promotion to operations manager, we tailored our schedules to maximize staff efficiency and provide the time off necessary to avoid burnout. When Regan McLaughlin joined us as community engagement manager, we were able to intentionally form community partnerships to support our efforts and grow our customer loyalty program. Together, we pioneered a WIC customer pre-order system with support from DC Health that evolved into a new mobile market website where customers can pre-order their groceries and speed their time at market. Quality, convenience, reliability, affordability and warm customer service: it’s the backbone of every successful retail operation, and it is what makes the Mobile Market an extraordinary asset to communities that are overlooked by conventional healthy food retailers.

Andrea Neal
Operations Manager

Regan McLaughlin
Community Engagement Manager

Samantha Pounder
Food Access Director

Addressing The Food Access Gap

“What we’ve learned is that there is no ‘one size fits all’ model to food security. Below are three different scenarios we experienced as partners within the food security space.”

At the start of the season, we were contacted by Common Good City Farm (a LeDroit Park farmers market) regarding our market stop in this neighborhood. We had been serving this location for 9 years, but after engaging with CGCF and sharing our sales data from the last 3 years with them, they were able to comfortably scale up their operations. By ‘passing the torch’ to Common Good City Farm, a community-led market was able to meet the community’s need—allowing us to roll on to another neighborhood needing access.

This transition freed us up to find a new location for the mobile market. We decided to relocate to the future site of Muki’s Market, a minority owned small-format grocery coming to Ward 7’s Fort Dupont neighborhood. The bi-weekly market offered 75 new Arcadia customers access to the Produce Plus program this year. We moved over $10,000 worth of fresh, local fruits, vegetables and meat there this season. The mobile market will continue to serve these customers until the brick and mortar grocery opens in late-2022, establishing this corner as a destination for nutritious, wholesome food and community connection. At that point, we will turn over our sales data and explore new ways to partner—possibly through monthly pop-up markets or as a distribution partner.

We anticipated moving on from our Oxon Run and Bellevue market stops in 2022, with the announcement of DC Greens’ Well at Oxon Run urban farm and Good Food Market’s brick and mortar opening in Bellevue. However, after consulting with both community partners we collectively determined there is still insufficient community food access despite these new more permanent developments. As a result, Arcadia has committed, with the enthusiastic support of our partners, to remain in these two locations until long-term solutions exist.
Market Season During COVID

Our initial plans in 2021 were to offer both Congress Heights and Anacostia as pre-order, pick-up only sites, as we did in 2020 under COVID. However, residents in Anacostia made it clear they wanted a full service market (there was even a petition!). We were grateful to receive this feedback and immediately pivoted to a full-service model for both locations. As a result, we held full-service markets at 8 locations, every other week this entire season. In addition, we served Wah Luck House via Produce Plus Community Drop Off for the second year in a row due to space constraints that prevent us from being able to offer a socially distant market experience.

By mid-season, our entire staff was fully vaccinated, and we vigilantly masked both indoors and outdoors the entirety of the season. Despite constant public exposure and close contact with our customers, we experienced just one positive COVID diagnosis on staff. Our careful adherence to masking, frequent and free testing, hand washing and social distancing meant there was no staff spread, and no market days lost due to the pandemic.

Another innovation in 2021 was a shift to pre-portioning and bagging produce to eliminate the possibility of surface contamination (the bag created a barrier so customers couldn’t touch the actual items) as well as reduce time spent ringing customers up. Before entering the market, customers were encouraged by our greeter to wash their hands at our hand wash table, or use hand sanitizer which was offered at multiple points throughout the market. Our Mobile Market associates shopped for customers, ringing them up as they selected, which kept the customer traffic flowing in one direction. We reinforced this flow by the intentional market design of tables and rope barriers, keeping customers and staff safe.
Executive Overview

This market season May-November, we served 8 locations with full service choice markets, plus the Wah Luck House in Chinatown through Produce Plus community drop-off, for a total of 9 communities served. Our total revenue from the sale of food this season was $154,000. We saw an increase in market sales from month to month May through September, which coincides with our farm’s growing season and demonstrates the increase of demand that comes with predictable, reliable service and high quality goods. The Mobile Market stocked 171 unique produce and grocery items over the course of the season—double the amount sold in prior years, and increased the choice and variety available to our customers.

Our average transaction for purchases made at our choice markets was just shy of $26. This is significant because nationwide the average corner store transaction is about $9. This figure tells us customers are doing actual grocery shopping with the Mobile Markets rather than picking up food casually. When you factor in our relatively low retail prices and benefit matching the quantity and quality of food our customers take home is remarkable.

What we don’t grow on our farm, we source from local farmers. In 2019, after the dissolution of Tuscarora Organic Cooperative, a farmer came to us on the behalf of the member farmers and asked if we’d continue to purchase from them. Turns out Arcadia’s mobile market, and therefore the under-resourced neighborhoods of DC, was the biggest purchaser of their organic produce. Franklin Sustainable Farms (Spring Run, PA) was founded, with us as their anchor client and now, three years later and through the entire pandemic, we still have access to their high quality, local food. This season, we purchased $26,000 worth of food from Franklin Sustainable Farms, another $30,000 from Earth Eats (Waynesboro, PA), and $41,000 from 4P Foods (Warrenton, VA).
Produce Plus Program And Donation Partners

Through the Produce Plus Program, operated by DC Greens, customers were able to shop at choice markets, spending $200 over the course of the season on fresh fruits and vegetables. We were assigned 75 unique customers per location for Mayfair, Bellevue, Oxon Run, Edgewood, Deanwood, Fort Dupont and Wah Luck House. In total, we moved $105,000 worth of food under Produce Plus. Over the course of the 17 week season we had customers claim 3193 shares of food, for a total value of $63,860. We moved an additional $40,140 worth of high quality, local food into our community through donations to the following community partners.

Bourne2fly is a fitness hub and community incubator for health and fitness professionals in DC. We are more than just a gym; we are a community activation station. We believe food and movement is medicine for your mind and body. Since the pandemic began, we have provided over 2000 bags of groceries into the community. Our gym is located within the community and allows direct access to resources within walking distance to our neighbors in need. We also provided delivery of these items to seniors and families in Ward 5.

+One redirects perfectly edible food to individuals and families who experience hunger. Our mission is to shift our collective consciousness through acts of compassion. We are driven by what’s possible if we minimized food waste to its smallest possible trace and instead empower communities making decisions on a daily basis such as pay bills or feed their children. Arcadia’s generous contributions are included with our supplies for four organizations (Centro Maria, Zion Outreach, Food Justice and Food not Bombs) that build grocery bags and meals for more than 500 families per week.

The DC Dream Center is a center for community where the needs of people in our city, especially youth, are met. From mentoring and tutoring to personal development and legal assistance, the DC|DC encompasses a spectrum of programs from low-barrier after-school activities and tutoring, to programs that offer deeper engagement such as one-on-one mentoring. We are dedicated to serving the needs of the community through a holistic approach. One person at a time, the DC|DC inspires youth and adults to dare to dream and learn to lead, so that they reach their God-given potential.

Program Partners

GW Partnership & Unity Health Care

Access to nutritious foods is directly related to a person’s life-long health. Healthy eating patterns can help lower the risk for chronic disease including high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer. In September, Michelle Patten, a Registered Dietician at George Washington University Hospital, approached us to help them address the health gap once patients leave the hospital. According to their research, patients in areas lacking access to fresh fruits and vegetables were more likely to return to hospital within three months of their initial admittance.

Thanksgiving Market with the Office of the Attorney General

The 2021 season reiterated the imperative role food access plays in community health and safety. In November, the DC Office of the Attorney General approached us to partner with them for their Thanksgiving Market. Raquel, who works with their ATTEND (Abating Truancy Through Engagement and Negotiated Dialogue) Mediation Program for children 12 and younger, stated that they have found in homes with truancy many of the families face food insecurity, domestic violence, and unemployment. The Thanksgiving Market served as a community resource hub that focused on restorative justice and underlying factors that cause chronic absenteeism in the classroom. Market attendees purchased about 100 pounds of produce, half of which was paid for using SNAP, and we donated another 200 pounds of sweet potatoes.

WIC Partnership with DC Health & 40th Anniversary Event

Due to a personal desire to make our markets more approachable to new moms, we created a WIC pre-order form to cut down time at market. With the support of DC Health, we were connected with some of DC’s local area directors- agencies such as Martha’s Table, Unity Health Care and Howard University Hospital- to disseminate the order link to their WIC recipients. Through trial and error the link evolved into a brand new mobile market website built for customers to place pre-orders, view our market schedule and connect to other pertinent information.

In September, with collaboration between DC Health, DC WIC and the office of Mayor Muriel Bowser, we hosted a 40th Anniversary of WIC in DC event at our Anacostia market location. In addition to our market DC Central Kitchen, Martha’s Table, Healthy Start, EduCare, Help Me Grow, SNAP Ed and DC Hunger Solutions tabled and provided services, resources and cooking demonstrations to attendees. DC WIC, Arcadia’s mobile market director and the mayor all made speeches.

Mayor Speech at Anniversary Event

Thanksgiving Market Donations

Through Engagement and Negotiated Dialogue (END) Mediation Program, food is redistributed to its smallest possible share to individuals and families in need. The Thanksgiving Market served as a community resource hub that focused on restorative justice and underlying factors that cause chronic absenteeism in the classroom.

General approached us to partner with them for their Thanksgiving Market. Raquel, who works with their ATTEND (Abating Truancy Through Engagement and Negotiated Dialogue) Mediation Program for children 12 and younger, stated that they have found in homes with truancy many of the families face food insecurity, domestic violence, and unemployment. The Thanksgiving Market served as a community resource hub that focused on restorative justice and underlying factors that cause chronic absenteeism in the classroom. Market attendees purchased about 100 pounds of produce, half of which was paid for using SNAP, and we donated another 200 pounds of sweet potatoes.

WIC Partnership with DC Health & 40th Anniversary Event

Due to a personal desire to make our markets more approachable to new moms, we created a WIC pre-order form to cut down time at market. With the support of DC Health, we were connected with some of DC’s local area directors- agencies such as Martha’s Table, Unity Health Care and Howard University Hospital- to disseminate the order link to their WIC recipients. Through trial and error the link evolved into a brand new mobile market website built for customers to place pre-orders, view our market schedule and connect to other pertinent information.

In September, with collaboration between DC Health, DC WIC and the office of Mayor Muriel Bowser, we hosted a 40th Anniversary of WIC in DC event at our Anacostia market location. In addition to our market DC Central Kitchen, Martha’s Table, Healthy Start, EduCare, Help Me Grow, SNAP Ed and DC Hunger Solutions tabled and provided services, resources and cooking demonstrations to attendees. DC WIC, Arcadia’s mobile market director and the mayor all made speeches.

Mayor Speech at Anniversary Event
Arcadia’s Farm, Bainum Foundation Farm & Sourcing

Arcadia’s mission is to create a more equitable, accessible and sustainable local food system in order to improve the health of our communities. We can not accomplish this without supporting our local farmers. Arcadia’s Farm grows about half of the produce we sell at market. The rest of the produce and meat we sell is provided by Bainum Family Foundation and sourced from within 120 mile radius from the independent farmers listed below.

Looking to the Future

Arcadia’s mobile market provides access to local, high quality food for the residents of Washington, DC that do not have traditional retailers in their neighborhoods, and stretches their benefit dollars farther through matching programs and the produce plus program. This season we continued to learn, adapt and tailor our retail strategy and operations to keep staff and customers safe during a global pandemic. We have faced unforeseen challenges, such as being displaced from our market headquarters- and dealt with malfunctioning freezers, limited cooler space and vehicle repairs. In the upcoming months, we look forward to moving into a new home base, running our winter markets and preparing for the future. Next season, we will return to weekly stops at all of our locations, expand and deepen our community partnership relationships and grow our loyalty program.