

Farmers Market...from Page 1A

vendors face outward under the big sheds so marketgoers can peruse fresh produce and personal care items along the perimeter without having to worry about being in an enclosed space.

"We have the hand sanitizing station, a handwashing station as you come in up there," Market Manager Mickey Cummings. "Everyone is facing out, and we are trying to maintain social distancing. I get on the microphone about every 30 minutes and ask people to please maintain their social distancing."

"We have plenty of hand sanitizing agents that we can loan people, and we are asking the vendors not to use any used bags or anything like that. We purchased a bunch of bags that they can use.

"Every year, we use advertising to make a big push all across North Georgia, but this year, we are trying to concentrate on local advertising, because it would be very difficult to maintain social distancing with 5,000 or 6,000 people here. Today, we are going to have over a thousand, but we are doing what we can."

These precautions will be in place at the Farmers Market for a little while longer as the market evaluates the situation and moves forward with getting back to a more normal season.

"We plan on operating this way for a couple of weeks until we see what the governor is saying and we see how things go here," Cummings said. "At some point, I'm not sure when,

we will bring back a few more vendors. And I'm hoping by the end of the month we will have all of our vendors in place. Right now, it is just agriculture-related vendors and those that are selling personal hygiene products.

"Call this strange, but I knew I had to get up early, and it was like I was a little kid at Christmas - I woke up at 3 in the morning, ready to go. We are just thankful that we can start this again, and it is really important that we do this safely. We don't want our country to suffer any more economically, so we have to open back up, but we are going to do it in a way that is safe to the public."

One vendor, Joy Nywening, sold handmade masks at the market for people still in need of them.

"I started making the masks because of the virus,

and it has taken many, many different patterns to make these fitted ones, which are everyone's favorites," Nywening said. "They are all made with three layers, two of cotton and one of the filter over the nosepiece, and they are machine washable. I plan to be here every week selling them with a bigger selection."

"I usually have purses and stuff here, but I have been sewing and stitching since I was a little girl. People told me that I had to make some masks, so I put aside my purses and started making the masks. I had a lot of masks this morning, and people have been really interested in getting them."

Produce vendors are still working on getting more products to sell but are having to make do until the weather improves.

"I have peaches and cantaloupe here today, that is all I could come out and sell," Ray Long said. "At my fruit stand in town I sell everything. I am up there by O'Reilly, and I have been up there 38 years and been up here at the Farmers Market ever since it opened. This season is alright, but it could be better. We have had people come through, and that is good."

Visitors to the market are



The Union County Farmers Market opened for the season on June 6, and plenty of people were happy to get back to buying fresh local produce. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

happy to once again have a place to buy locally grown fresh produce and supplies, which in many ways is preferable to having to go into crowded stores right now.

"I love markets and fresh local food," said Daniel Bennett from Lawrenceville. "The vendors here are concerned about our safety, and we get to support them because they were working during the shutdown to make sure they could sell here."

"I was talking to a few of them, and things like this are their

main source of income during the season. I think it is great to see all the people out here supporting local growing, and I would take this over the stuff in stores any day."

Moving forward, the market will be open every Tuesday from 2-5 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Until further notice, there will be no special customer events at the market, like the Honeybee Jubilee or free tomato sandwich day, and vendors will not be handing out samples.

Capt. Kiser...from Page 1A

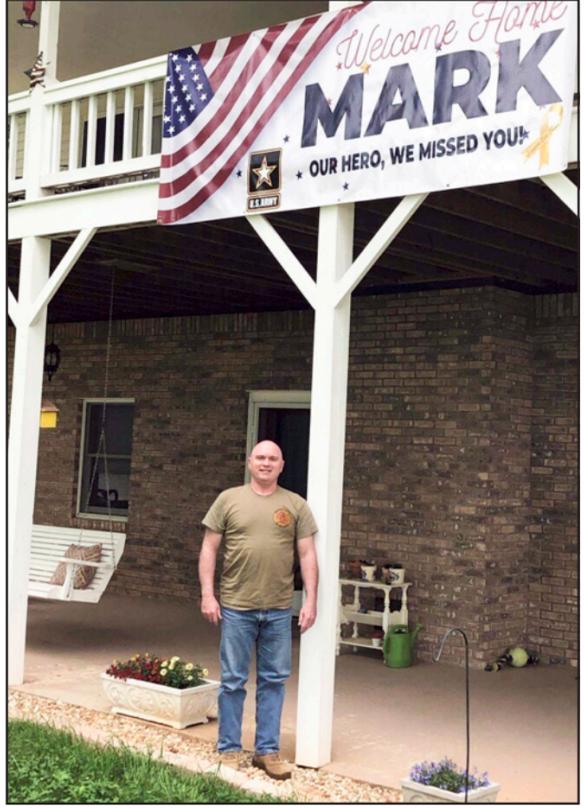
Kiser said. "I accepted that command position, and that brings me to what happened to go to New York.

"I was contacted by the 429th (Multifunctional Medical Battalion) in Savannah, and when all this COVID stuff started, they started putting together what they call Task Force," Kiser said. "They contacted me - my unit is a medical unit, and we have occupational therapists, medics, nurses and so on.

"They were looking for nurses, medics and occupational therapists to pull from my unit, so I was able to fulfill everything except occupational therapist. There was a substitution list. In other words, you could take a physical therapist and substitute them in as an occupational therapist, and you could take a nurse and put them into the occupational therapist position."

With his recent experience combating the virus, Kiser recommends that people continue taking the appropriate safety precautions until things begin to return to some semblance of normal.

"I think this virus is going to remind everybody how important good hygiene is," Kiser said. "That is going to be the No. 1 takeaway from all of this. I think wearing gloves when you are pumping gas and wearing gloves when pushing



Kiser was glad to get home to his family on May 24 - and a warm welcome home it was. Photo/Submitted

the cart through the store are going to be very important.

"Until we get to some kind of normal, I think a mask is going to be important when

you are in a crowded venue with more than 15 or 20 people, like in a church, especially if you are sick."

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