

# Watch Now: Four Seasons Farm Market braves the cold in Amherst

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Mary Hurst, co-organizer of the Four Seasons Farmers Market, checks a customer's list on Jan. 6.  
Lee Luther Jr. Photos, for The (Amherst) New Era-Progress

**P**iles of snow lined streets and parking lots in downtown Amherst with the possibility for more wintry precipitation after nightfall the afternoon of Jan. 6 as Four Seasons Farm Market opened for the first time in 2022.

The online farmers market, which has an in-person farm table available for pickup on Thursdays, lives up to its name in the height of winter when most farmers markets have closed up shop.

Mary Hurst, a co-organizer, said there has been a great demand among Amherst residents for an online market. Four Seasons Farm Market started operating the first week of September and sets up each Thursday at 4 p.m. behind Ritchie's Barber Shop on South Main Street.

Shoppers can order 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday and Tuesday with the pickup period set for 4 to 5:30 p.m. Thursday.

"We're running about 15 orders a week," said Hurst.

The market's featured items include eggs fresh from local farms, meats, seasonal fruits and vegetables, jams, jellies, pickles, relishes and other home canned foods, local honey and home baked items such as pie, breads, cookies, cakes and treats for pets.

From May to September, the market will set up its pickup in the Hill Hardware parking lot next to the Amherst Town Hall building on South Main Street, Hurst said. The market has room for 13 vendors and has eight spots already filled, Hurst said.

Amherst town resident Paula Ives, a vendor and co-organizer, said she loves taking part in market's scene of camaraderie.

"That was the big need for a lot of people," Ives said of the online ordering.

John Shimp of Lowesville was among those who stopped by Jan. 6 to pick up goods. He doesn't have chickens, so he particularly likes the fresh eggs, and sometimes he splurges to get special breads.

"It really is a wonderful thing," Shimp said of the year-round market.

Susan O'Neil, a barber at Ritchie's Barber Shop, also helps run the market.

"I enjoy the market because it's an outlet for my baking, which I love to do," said O'Neil. "So for me it's a third of the people I work with, a third of the community I'm serving and a third that I enjoy my baking and my canning and it's an offshoot of what I already like to do myself."

Vendors like when a customer is looking for a particular item and one of them can provide it locally, Hurst said.

Hurst said the market works as a cooperative so each vendor has a responsibility. It collects a small percentage of sales and anything left over after operating expenses goes back to the vendors, she said.

Each vehicle that drives through or a person who walks up involves a friendly chat and exchange. Some like the convenience of driving through and not having to get out of their cars, Hurst said.

"We have several of our customers that have mobility issues so this is perfect for them and then just drive up and we hand them their food," Hurst said.

O'Neil said for many years she's canned items for herself, so now she makes more pickles, jams and other items to sell people while soaking in the friendly atmosphere.

"And I like the ladies I work with," O'Neil said.