

## Farmer's Market celebrates first decade

Oct 22, 2008

By [Dave Schwab](#) - La Jolla Light

Where would La Jolla be without its farmer's market?

That was the question asked of Sherry Ahern, founder of La Jolla's homegrown produce "happening," by her daughter who practically grew up attending the weekend event.

For one, La Jolla Elementary School would not have benefited from the nearly \$1 million generated by the market over the past 10 years, Ahern said.

"That's a nice endowment. We are spending every nickel of it to make sure those kids have what they need."

On Sunday, the La Jolla Open Aire Market will celebrate its 10th anniversary with a harvest festival. There will be booths, games, music by the Corvelles, and Halloween portraits.

Begun with produce from 14 local growers, La Jolla's farmer's market has mushroomed to include 100-plus vendors each week plus an array of artisans selling everything from photography and paintings to jewelry, clothes, flowers and food.

"We really wanted to come up with something that would bring the community together," said Ahern, who originally spearheaded development of the market to raise funds to provide a library and librarian for La Jolla Elementary School.

"People all over the world shop daily for fresh fruits and vegetables. I thought of it as a healthy, neighborhood ongoing fundraiser."

### **Veggie varieties**

Without the farmer's market, produce shopping would have a lot less variety in the Jewel, noted bookstore owner Nancy Warwick, a La Jolla Elementary alum who regularly attends the event.

"I love to cook and I love quality ingredients and as much as I can I buy organic," said Warwick. "I go to La Jolla Farmers Market to buy their specialty items like heirloom tomatoes, squash blossoms, stone fruits and lots of mushrooms. I'm very focused on the fresh produce."



La Jolla Elementary says thank you to all of La Jolla Open Aire Market's supporters.

Photo by: Danielle Vinland

For artisan Stella Flocks, the market provided her with a perfect venue to sell her silk flower arrangements.

"I was one of the first vendors," she said. "We love it: just the overall ambiance, the food court. It's a nice family atmosphere."

La Jolla George Petrou, would have one less venue to sell his olives and olive oil without La Jolla's Farmers Market.

### **'The best'**

"I've been there every Sunday for 10 years," he said. "People know we have good produce. They come from all over. We sell at 29 markets, and La Jolla's is the best."

Francis O'Neill Zimmerman, who was on the San Diego school board when Ahern started the fundraising event 10 years ago, noted it's unique in a number of ways.

"It's absolutely the first one at a public school," she said. "Ambitious folks wanting to make money for a school was a great idea. It's a wonderful thing for the school, and a nice thing for the community."

Eight percent of vendors' gross profits from the farmers market, and a flat rate of \$45 per artisan, is donated back to La Jolla Elementary to support a plethora of school programs - music, arts, phys ed, technology - that otherwise wouldn't be funded due to state education budget cuts.

Ahern pointed out why La Jolla's farmers market is so special: "The market belongs to everyone in the community."

### **Fast Facts**

- **La Jolla Open Aire Market**
- **Sundays, rain or shine**
- **9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**
- **La Jolla Elementary School's upper playground at Girard Avenue and Genter Street.**
- **(858) 454-1699**
- **[www.lajollamarket.com](http://www.lajollamarket.com)**