

Beloit Farmers Market starts Saturday

By Amanda Podgorny

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Saturday marks the kick-off for this year's downtown Beloit Farmers Market.

Kathleen Braatz, executive director of the Downtown Beloit Association, said things are much different during the regular season and people can expect to see a larger selection of fresh produce and other products.

"The pre-sale is so fun because it's a little inkling of what's to come," Braatz said. "What shifts (during the regular season) is it hits the streets."

"There's a diversity of products that is just amazing," she said.

And with about 80 vendors packing the 300 block of State Street and onto Grand Avenue, it's easy to believe.

From elk meat and fresh eggs to woodland plants and kettle corn, the market will feature a little bit of everything. Braatz said there are also vendors located in the parking lot where the pre-sale was held at the corner of State and Grand.

A.J. Grottke, from Lotus Growing Technologies (LGT) in Orfordville, will be one of many first-time vendors at the Beloit Farmers Market.

"(I) went shopping there last year," Grottke said. "For me, it was the best farmers market I've been to."

He commented that the Beloit market is just the right size, where you're able to find whatever you need.

Grottke will be selling a variety of homegrown mushrooms throughout the season, as well as hydroponics kits. Later in June, he plans to have mushroom grow kits so that people can grow their own mushrooms.

Cindy Robinson, from R Family Farm in Poplar Grove, Ill., is also a first-time vendor at the Beloit market and will be selling a variety of farm-raised meats. She will have farm raised pork, beef, chicken, turkey, goat and lamb that are raised on her family farm.

"We don't use hormones, steroids or antibiotics," Robinson said of her livestock operation.

She decided to come to the Beloit market because she's trying to do more local things. That way,

people can come tour the farm during open house dates.

Braatz said on average about 3,000 people will walk through downtown Beloit every Saturday during the farmers market, and there are lots of things to celebrate this season.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded the Downtown Beloit Association the 2011 Great American Main Street Award in May. Winners are recognized for exceptional accomplishments in revitalizing the nation's historic and traditional Main Street commercial districts.

Braatz said the DBA is also excited about the repaving of State Street, giving it a new brick surface.

The Downtown Beloit Farmers Market will run every Saturday, from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., rain or shine, through October.

