

# Better Me Farmers' Market

## Background

The RIT Better Me Farmer's Market started in 2008 as a convenient way for students, faculty, and staff to have access to fresh, locally grown produce and goods. Since it started, the market has proven to be a boon to the RIT community. In addition to the services providing by RIT Dining, the market offers another way for the community to have access to healthy food. The Nutrition Committee at RIT is growing its presence on campus, and through the Farmers' Market they can bring attention to the benefits of eating locally. In

addition to the undeniable health benefits of eating local, nutrient dense produce, the market also promotes the green initiative at RIT. The sustainable practices of the local farmers' compliment the goals of sustainability at RIT. Studies show that "farmers markets also help to promote nutrition education, wholesome eating habits, and better food preparation, as well as boosting the community's economy." (USDA) RIT is being a socially responsible by participating in the Farmers' Market

program, and the benefits of the market have a ripple effect through the greater Rochester community. RIT's goal of sustainability partners perfectly with the accomplishments of the Farmers' Market. The market is traditionally held one day a week during the fall season.



## 2011 Farmers' Market

This year, the Farmers' Market was held every Thursday for seven consecutive weeks from September 8 thru October 20 from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. Six vendors were present throughout the market, and each provided a unique offering to students. Allen's Hill Farm specialized in healthy granola and apple cider molasses. Fresh, locally produced honey was provided by Bloomfield Honey Farm, who distinguish themselves from others by using no medication on their bees. Locally grown and primarily organic pro-

duce was brought in by R&M Bischooping, and equally delicious apples in a variety of types were available from K&S Bischooping. Richard J Schickler, Nursery provided color to the market with his expansive selection of plants, shrubs, and flowers. There were a plethora of healthy options available, and for those with a sweet tooth Newbury Park Pastries specialized in decadent cupcakes and filling specialty breads. In addition to the vendors at the market, RIT Dining Services was present each week offering free

samples that highlighted the local food available at the market. RIT Dining Services also partnered with the RIT Community Garden to highlight food grown as local as possible: right on the RIT campus. Fitness trainers were present with a registered dietician to offer nutrition and exercise advice, and wellness coaches attended each market to offer complimentary blood pressure screenings. Better Me had a presence at each market, and to ensure the enjoyment of market goers provided the following initiatives:

## Photo Contest

This year featured the first annual Better Me Farmers' Market Photo Contest. The contest was open to any RIT student, faculty, or staff and was opened during the September 29 market. The guidelines of the contest were to have a photograph that captured the energy and excitement of the market.

Over a dozen photographs were entered into the contest, and over 60 people voted on the winning photograph.

*First Place Prize was awarded to Brian Keyes, student, Pictured Right*



## Rewards Card

**"[The Rewards Card] got people to our market. Great marketing tool."  
-Vendor**

Available at the Better Me table were rewards cards that gave participants an incentive to make multiple purchases at the market. After getting credit for visiting the Better Me table

and bringing a recyclable bag, participants needed to make purchases at four vendors to win the prize. The card was accepted throughout the entire market, and participants were

not limited to only one card. The prize for filling up the entire card was a Better Me T-shirt.

## Weekly Raffle

A free raffle was held each week that participants could enter into by providing their name and email address. The prize each

week was a Better Me gift bag which consisted of a recyclable Wegmans bag and a Better Me T-shirt.



## Weekly Trivia Question

A trivia question was decided on each week that emphasized local agriculture. Questions often featured produce that was available right at the market. The first person to answer the question correctly won a Better Me T-shirt.



*Pictured Above: 2nd place photo contest photograph by Anna Fiorucci, staff*

*Pictured Left, , 3rd place photo contest photograph by Yerbol Yembergenov, student*

## Featured Vendor Publication

Each week a specific vendor was picked to be highlighted that week. The Featured Vendor publication was sent out every Tuesday, and included a listing of items that the vendor would be emphasizing that week as well as photographs depicting each vendors' stand. By working with RIT Dining Services, vendors that were featured during certain weeks were

also featured in the food sample that week. Each vendor was highlighted once, and satisfaction of the publication was high.



Natural Granola from Allens Hill Farm

## Suggestions and Conclusions

The market was extremely successful this year, and all vendors stated that they would enjoy being a part of next year's RIT Farmers' Market. By providing a comprehensive survey to the vendors of the market, Better Me was able to get an in depth analysis on the market, and how it can be improved for next year. Although this market showed increases in attendance from last year, the location is still considered to be something that can be worked on. A more centralized location would help increase traffic in the market, particularly from faculty and staff. One success that was noted several times was the presence of RIT Dining with the free samples and recipes. The variety of recipes that integrated local foods was extremely popular at the market, and should be continued in the future. Each week copies of the recipes were in high demand, and were a driving source of traffic to the Better Me website. The "Featured Vendor" publication was also viewed favorably; however there is still room for improvement in the marketing plan.

Suggestions for increasing the marketing initiative included integrating the market

into new student orientation, involving clubs on campus, and more signage around campus. The entertainment aspect of the market that was included this year was also reviewed positively, as it attracted the attention of passersby and generated more traffic. The incentives for market goers, like the Reward Card, were noted to be a positive addition as well but the rewards for them should be more varied next year.

Overall, there is evidence to support that the market is beneficial to the RIT campus, and with a fortified marketing plan for next year and other minor changes, the market will continue to be successful on campus. By furthering the collaboration between the Farmers' Market and the RIT Green movement, the market will become a staple of the university.

**"Very nice! Thank you for the write-up, photo, and featured dishes too. Excellent to have recipes available for people to try -featuring local products!"**



Fresh produce from R&M

# RIT Better Me

*Are you ready?*

## Contact Information

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*Employee health is very important to the Rochester Institute of Technology. It is the mission of RIT's Better Me Employee Wellness program to provide a variety of opportunities designed to encourage personal responsibility and growth in the area of total wellness. The Better Me wellness program was introduced in October 2007 and is provided for all employees and they are encouraged to explore and learn more about healthy lifestyles.*

*There are many benefits to investing in an employee wellness program. RIT has quickly become a leader in employee wellness, and boasts a state-of-the-art fitness facility as well as personal training, and a wide variety of fitness and wellness classes. In addition to the fitness capabilities of the Gordon Field House, Better Me as a fitness center in Global Village that is specifically geared towards Faculty and Staff. Fitness managers [Jacques-Luis Nodar](#) and [Joseph Delgado](#) are available to meet for individual training, and also for group sessions. There is also a Registered Dietitian available who can provide individualized meal planning and perform Resting Metabolic Rate testing.*

*Better me also coordinates programs such as Weight Watchers at Work, wellness coaching thru Wellness Coaches USA, and services through Excellus Blue-Cross BlueShield and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). RIT was a recipient of the Rochester Business Journal's Wealth of Health Award in 2009 and 2011, under-*

