

Featured Guest Interviews

Stephanie Haynes (@vancouverfarmersmarket, vancouverfarmersmarket.com)

Stephanie Haynes: [00:00:21] So my name is Stephanie Haynes. I'm the partnerships and programs manager at the Vancouver Farmer's market in Vancouver, Washington. My job has changed a lot during the pandemic, but my main focus is working on food access programming for the market. And then I helped to start our online market. And starting this year, we also have sort of a new program to tie in with our online market called Market Box, which is more of a subscription program.

Just a little about my background. I don't know if that's interesting, but I graduated from the University of Vermont with a degree in Environmental Studies and business administration. After school, I wasn't—I was super interested in food systems, but not quite sure where I wanted to go, so I actually did an AmeriCorps program in Salem, Oregon, where I helped teach kids how to farm and some small business skills cause they sold at the farmer's market there.

And I just got really interested in farmer's markets from there, so I started at the Vancouver farmer's market after that. And now it's been about actually almost six years since I've been at the market. We are quite a large market.

Diego Footer: [00:01:51] Okay. It's a long time there. And just to keep everybody clear to it.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:01:57] Oh, go ahead.

Diego Footer: [00:01:58] I say it's Vancouver, Washington in the US, not Vancouver, Canada. Just so people don't get confused as we go along.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:02:06] Right. Vancouver, Washington. Very important. We get mistaken all the time for Vancouver, BC. We even get phone calls from Vancouver, BC, which is hilarious because I'm like, clearly it's an American number, but maybe not so clear. I don't know. But yeah, we're the Vancouver Market in Vancouver, Washington, where we're quite a big market. We have 200 members, vendors and yeah. We're Saturdays and Sundays, and we also have Thursday market as well in the summers.

Diego Footer: [00:02:44] So that's a pretty active market. When I think of the landscape of farmer's markets out there, three physical markets a week. When you and other members of the team were first looking at moving the market online, why was that? What was the catalyst?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:03:03] Yeah, so, we were set to open in March of 2020, and just as COVID was just starting to be discovered in Seattle, and our city actually shut the market down. They were like, no farmer's market. You can't open. And we were like, Hey guys, people need to access fresh fruits and vegetables. We're essentially an outdoor grocery store, and we are a really important resource for this community, especially in downtown Vancouver, USA.

There's actually no grocery store downtown, and the closest one is over a mile away and not walking distance because you have to walk on the highway. So, really, really important resource in our community. So when the city shut us down, at the same time we were coming up with our reopening plan to follow COVID protocols, which at that time didn't exist for farmer's markets.

We helped write them along with several other farmer's markets in Washington state. We, at the same time, we're working from home, and I was really like, we need to be able to serve our customers who aren't comfortable coming to the market, even with these strict, strict safety and health precautions.

There are going to be those customers who are at risk, you know, in the high-risk category or they're caring for high-risk customers, or other people who just don't feel comfortable, and that's okay too. So, while we were working for about six weeks on a reopening plan—that's how long we were shut down for—I was working on a plan to also open an online market at the same time.

So that's where we got started. It's something we had been thinking about for a long time, in the digital age. You know, people *do* like to browse products online, but I really don't think that we would have done it if it wasn't for the COVID push. So yeah, that's really how we got started.

Diego Footer: [00:05:08] Right. Why is that? So if we, if COVID *hadn't* happened, and you didn't get that push from COVID, why wouldn't you have gotten online? What were some of the thoughts, the resistance to doing that at the time?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:05:21] Yeah, it's mostly as a non-profit, we have such limited resources. And because of the timing of COVID, we were able to get a couple of grants that we definitely would not have otherwise been able to get to help us put the infrastructure in for an online market. So that includes a walk-in cooler that we built in our basement, tables and refrigeration and all this equipment.

And they also, the grants help pay for some staff time honestly that we wouldn't be able to afford. We have a whole nother position that is being paid for through a grant. So it's just time and resources. Farmer's markets are really a lot of work. Staff in farmer's market is—it's really hard to retain staff because it's a really weird, really hard job to be a market manager.

So, if it wasn't for COVID or like that grant funding that came at the right time, we probably would have never done it just because. And also, I had six weeks at home to plan while the market was shut down. I don't have the luxury of that time.

Diego Footer: Right.

Stephanie Haynes: Like I even had to just rush to do this interview. So yeah, market managers, I would say this is not just an “us” thing. It's like across the country are really stretched thin. It was a definitely a unique opportunity.

Diego Footer: [00:06:51] Given the six weeks at home to plan, do research, was part of that reservation? I mean, if you set the money part of it aside, which is totally justifiable, if you need the stuff you need, the people, you don't have the funds to do that, you can't do it, but was part of it also just, like any of us doing anything, there's a little bit of fear of the

unknown, like how do I do this? How am I going to set it up? Like, it seems like it's a lot of work, the whole...It's something out of the box because traditionally, if you say farmer's market to most people who know what farmer's markets are, they're going to think walking around a parking lot or some other plaza. There's going to be easy up set up, and I'm buying there. They're not thinking online. So I think going online with the whole farmer's market is very much out of the box for most people's thinking.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:07:34] Yeah. And I also think there's still that thinking around farmer's markets. There is like a national farmer's market coalition, and like I'm on the email chain, and some people are still like, don't put your farmer's markets online, it's just not what a farmer's market is.

We think it could definitely be both, and we do have customers who use our online market some weeks come to the physical farmer's market other weeks. And then there are customers who are also like, I never wanted to come to the market. There's too many people it's overwhelming. I don't like choosing in the moment. I feel a lot of pressure, so they do really like taking the time to browse products, read about the farmers, and then just do an easy, curbside pickup instead.

And so, I think like we are reaching a different kind of customer past COVID. People now are so worried about catching or spreading COVID, they're more using the online market because of convenience, because they can think about their purchases in advance, and they don't have to be around a crowd of people if that's not their jam, you know?

Diego Footer: [00:08:43] Would you say it's fair to say that, by bringing the market online, you now serve more customers than you did with a physical-only market? Again, I know it's a little weird with COVID and everything, but do you think that by adding online, you've retained that initial customer base and then added some?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:09:07] I think that's really hard to say, and I'm just not sure. I would really like to think that we are. We have a new program that's actually—I got a grant for before COVID so it just nicely ties in with the online market we're doing now, but it is basically a fruit and vegetable box that customers sign up for and receive, it's like a surprise every week. Kind of like a traditional CSA model, except for we're purchasing from multiple farmers.

And in that program, I've definitely seen new names. I've never met them. They've never ordered from our online market before. So in that way, I think we are, and we're using Local Line for that as well, and for that, those are definitely new customers. We're definitely reaching people who aren't entirely sure what to do with rhubarb or what kohlrabi is. And the goal of that program is to really help introduce people to different kinds of fruits and veggies, and kind of give them recipes and storage tips to help them be successful farmer's market shoppers in the future.

So with that program, I would say we're definitely reaching a different clientele than necessarily would come to the farmer's market. Or maybe they just came to the farmer's market, and they didn't buy certain things. Maybe they came for lunch, or they came for flowers, but they weren't purchasing from farmers. So, I'm not sure exactly.

I can't speak to, if we've reached a whole new client base with our original online market model, but I do think that we *are* able to serve different customer needs in different times. Not everyone can come bring all the kids, bring the stroller, bring the dog, park far away, walk

to the market. Not everyone wants to do that every weekend. So, we are allowing people to, with our online order, they're able to order during the week, pick up, you know, it takes two minutes to pick up your order.

So, I think the convenience factor is definitely something we're hitting on. So maybe that customer who shops at both the physical market and the online market, maybe they would have only shopped at the market once a month, but instead they're shopping every week, but they're choosing online markets sometimes, physical markets sometimes. I don't know if that really answered your question, but...

Diego Footer: [00:11:40] No, I think it's a great answer. And the follow-up to that would be, I understand the reservation of, I'll say, the farmer's market community to want to shake that up, 'cause there is something special about that. It's a community being in one place, supporting people from that community physically, and you're right. Different people have different lives. Convenience is a thing, and times change, you know. A lot of people work weekends now, a lot of people have kids now, and kids are very active on weekends. And in making it to the market on those times might not be easy for everybody.

Do you think that farmer's markets need to at least consider these options and look to evolve? And it's not to say, let's abandon the past. Let's not abandon what's special, but let's look to try and include other groups of people that otherwise this model isn't perfect for them, yet, what we offer in terms of product is what they're looking for.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:12:55] Yeah, I think that farmers markets should absolutely consider this model. I know just from some informational interviews of other farmer's markets doing similar or the same exact thing program, that there are many different ways of making it work. Utilizing volunteers, getting local grants to help fund it, which I know is probably farmer's markets' like number one hurdle.

But yeah, I would definitely encourage farmer's markets to try it. I think that we're increasing accessibility by offering this option. I think we are potentially hitting a different customer base with the convenience factor, and I think that farmer's markets do you have, maybe, I mean you're right.

It is a community. It is its own special place, especially, I feel that, especially at our farmer's market, but I think that it is important to not get left behind—for farmer's markets to get left behind. When people can order something from their phone, and it shows up three hours later or something like, I feel like farmer's market should be looking at how these technologies can tie in.

That being said, I still feel like going to the farmer's market with your family on a nice day, having lunch, shopping for your produce, like that's super, super important. But I think we do have the opportunity or farmer's markets have the opportunity to reach lots of different customers, by just keeping up with what's going on in the greater grocery world, I guess.

Diego Footer: [00:14:35] Sure. Yeah, I mean, I think a farmer's markets, like just in general, then I would say my impression of farmer's markets is it's to sell the most food that you can that's grown locally to people locally. And whatever you can do to facilitate that and get local grown food into the hands of more people local, why not?

And I, that's not to say that's a free lunch. There's work obviously involved, but like you said, the grocery landscape has changed. It's evolving, and people have more choices than ever now to get food, and farmer's markets aren't the only place you can look to get seasonal, organic produce these days.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:15:22] Yeah. And I think that's why the online market and also like our new, market box program, those do compete with grocery store delivery, Amazon delivery, and like meal kit boxes and stuff. But it's local produce. It's supporting your local economy. It's supporting your local growers. It's more sustainable, less food miles. So we *are* trying to compete with those other ways to get your groceries. And definitely having the online presence is a really big part about that. I had one other thing I was going to say, but I can't remember. Maybe it'll come to me.

Diego Footer: [00:16:05] I have a follow up on that, too.

Stephanie Haynes: Yeah, sure.

Diego Footer: One other thing I want to make people aware of is, Local Line has a few separate models for farmer's markets. In the model that you use at the Vancouver farmer's market is the Hub Model for farmer's markets, meaning that vendors have a vendor access account.

You guys are the online store. You take payments, you do the fulfillment on the orders, you aggregate the product, and then you pay out to vendors. Now you could go the other way, where vendors are responsible for their own, and the market is just, like, a group of stores, an Etsy-type model, but you guys are the hub. When you looked at those two models, I'm sure early on, why did you go the hub route?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:16:57] Yeah. Okay. This is bringing me back to what I was thinking when you were talking before is that when COVID started, we had to cut a lot of our programs, a lot of our funding, a lot of our staffing to make sure we could hit the bare minimum function of our organization.

The bare minimum function of a farmer's market is to increase sales for vendors. And we are providing space to vendors to be successful in their business, especially farmers. So, we chose the hub model because we're making it the most easiest, the most easy for vendors. So, they have the responsibility of uploading their products, uploading their pictures, but we are taking care of all of the packing and preparation and customer service piece of curbside pickup.

And we do charge vendors of fee, it's super low, I'll be honest. We don't break even on this program without grant funding. I don't know if you want to put that in the book. We need these outside funding sources to be able to keep this program like as accessible to vendors as possible.

And it's also just a way for us to do like our core function that I talked about, like increasing sales for vendors every day, that's what we're doing. That's our job, creating space for our vendors to sell and be successful, and helping them do that. So, yeah, that's definitely why we went with the hub model.

And I think the market model...basically, it just serves as a pre-order system. So, you check out with those vendors, but then I'm not sure if other people are doing like you have to pick up at each vendor booth, to us, like, that is just creating more work for vendors. And this was just a way that we could increase sales for vendors without having them do a lot.

I mean, my pitch to vendors who are hesitant about joining the online market is you're going to do basically nothing. You're going to upload your products. We're going to pick them up from you at the market. We're going to pack them and we're going to give them to the customer. We're going to take care of the payment, and then you're just going to get money in your bank account. And that is that's my pitch to vendors who are hesitant, like you will do not a whole lot, and make money doing so.

Diego Footer: [00:19:29] It's just another venue or avenue for them to sell product in, right? Like, they're probably not having the same customer who would normally stop at their market booth on a Thursday or Saturday or Sunday order online, at least not consistently. Like, the person that goes and shops at the market and goes to all their favorite vendors, like, that's what they do.

It's the other group of people who might say, I can't do that. Or I just, I don't feel comfortable doing that. They participate. A vendor, you upload your stuff. You do your work online. That's the part they have to do, and then supply the product. And then if they get bonus sales out of it, great. It seems like a why *wouldn't* a vendor participate type of problem.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:20:12] Totally, totally. And the great thing is that most of the vendors we have participating are at the physical market anyway, so we actually have a volunteer who goes and picks up the online orders from their booth. So it's just super convenient way for vendors to just add extra sales to their weekend, you know. Even if it's \$50 a week, we have 40 market weeks that adds up over time, and it's just a little boost to sales.

Diego Footer: [00:20:45] When you look at having done this now for over a year, can you tell me about the moment when you realized, okay, we made a good choice. Like, this is really working out well.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:21:03] Yeah. I'm not going to lie. There's been a lot of challenges to this program, but I think when I've received emails from customers who are just so thankful and just love the online market model, that has made me feel like we're doing the right thing. And then I would also say that when I pulled like the vendor—at the end of last year, I pulled, the total vendor reports for the year, and when I see some of those numbers, like one of our farms made like almost \$10,000 on the online market. And when I see that, it makes me feel like that's not insignificant. That is a huge boost to their physical market sales, so that's when I feel like I knew we were successful. When I hear that it's beneficial for both customers and vendors.

Diego Footer: [00:22:11] What do the customers say? And we'll definitely get to the challenges, by the way.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:22:16] Yeah. So I had one customer who just has thanked us so much. She's immune compromised, she actually can't get the vaccine, either because of some health issues that she has, and she has used the online market every single week since we started. She loves supporting the farmer's market, but just doesn't want to have that risk to her health to be around people right now maybe for a long time. And, she was like, this is an

amazing way to support the farmer's market vendors that I've always known and loved without coming to the market.

On the other side of the spectrum, like I've had a customer recently who, was like, I like just discovered, the online market this year, and I have a lot of like social anxiety. And she was just telling me that for her, when she goes up to a vendor booth, she feels like, especially if there's a line behind her, so much pressure to choose the right thing. If she forgot her shopping lists, but she's like in that moment, just feeling like pressured to buy something, and she would often get home and that's not really what she wanted.

So from her perspective, the ability to really read about all the farmers, their growing practices online, and then making sure what she's buying is matching what she wants to cook for dinner that week, that was really beneficial to her. So I think those two perspectives from customers do make me feel like, this program is beneficial.

Diego Footer: [00:24:09] What about in terms of the market being able to promote itself and grow? I sell product online, and I can imagine kind of that old school model, which is really quite farmer's markets where it's like what car dealerships were when I was a kid. You could see a commercial on TV, but somebody would have to see that and then physically drive to say a car lot to buy the car.

Well, now you can say, oh, look at these great vendors. Look at these great tomatoes, grown by ABC farm. If you want them, they're in the box this week, here's a link where you can buy them now. So you've taken that telling the story, the pitch, to potentially getting a transaction, and you've closed that gap down to just one click away versus the days potentially. Oh, I got to remember to go there and get those.

How has it changed how you guys have been able to advertise, promote, and build the market by now having an actual place where people can go to purchase instead of just talking about stuff and saying, come see us Thursday, Saturday, Sunday, we're here.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:25:21] Yeah. We've done a lot of shifting of our social media this year. And it's not really. Oh, gosh, I activated Siri, sorry. It's not really, come to the market, it's how to shop successfully. We don't actually want more bodies at the farmer's market right now. Right now, like we still are holding a capacity, a line. And if that line's really long at the physical market, people get upset, but we are keeping it still safe to shop.

So we actually don't want more bodies at the market. What we want is for people who are coming to the market to feel confident and comfortable and have success shopping with our vendors, they're getting hopefully 80% of their groceries from the market, they're eating seasonally. They know how to prepare interesting varieties of vegetables.

And that's really...our social media really has shifted to that. So, we've moved away from, "Our online store is open for the week," to, "Here's a new vendor that's on the store this week, and these are the products that you can find, and this is how you use them." Or like we'll promote like, "A brand new farmer started on the market this week. Like, they have X growing practices, come support them because they're brand new. Purchase from them."

So it definitely has, and I think a lot of farmer's markets would say the same thing, is that our social media presence has totally shifted from that of just come see us, to be successful shopping with us, whether that be physically or online.

Diego Footer: [00:27:15] That promotion and how you're curating this story and the experience for the customer, that's something it's changed over time. What about just how you've run the online store itself? How has that changed over time? Just based upon experiences, real world feedback, anything we do, we say, this is how I want it to be on day one, you do it. And then you see how people interact, react to it, and then you modify it. So, if you look at the store now, and where it's going, how has it changed compared to where it started?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:27:54] That's a good question.

Diego Footer: [00:27:56] I mean those are an example, like putting together the boxes?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:28:02] Yeah, our like CSA model boxes. That was—it's tricky because that program was already planned pre-COVID to start this year. It's just like on a grant cycle, but I would say that like most of our program changes since we started the program have been internal, like a customer wouldn't necessarily notice.

And by that, we still have the same ordering period. We still have similar products on the store. We still have the same parking spaces for the curbside pickup. So most of our changes have been becoming more efficient, utilizing staff and volunteer time within the program.

And then I would say the other thing is that we've learned a lot about how to store produce 'cause we've never been the ones to store any produce. Obviously, the farmers for the physical market, they bring the produce from their farm, they sell it, but now we're storing produce. We did build a walk-in cooler.

I learned that some things like lids, some things don't like lids, sometimes a refrigerator breaks in the middle of the night and everything in that fridge goes bad cause it's hot out, so I've definitely learned a lot. And yeah, most of our improvements have just been internal. I don't know if a customer would notice, actually.

Diego Footer: [00:29:30] Okay. No, no. That's fair. That's fair. Sure. No, that's fair. What about this, let's say I'm a market manager, and I hear what you're doing. I'm like, wow, that sounds great. I want to empower my vendors to be able to sell more. I want to get more food out to my local community. I'm going to mimic your model, and I've heard this interview. I read the book. I look at the guide of Local Line, so I know how to do the tech side of things and get the hub set up.

What are some of the reading between the lines or the experiential things you've learned over the past year? Is there a few that you could give me to say, Hey, you're doing this. Here's some things you really want to focus on to make this a success.

Stephanie Haynes: [00:30:16] Yeah. So the biggest thing is helping vendors to be successful setting up their profiles and the timing of dropping orders, what the expectations are as far as if they say online, they're selling a pound of lettuce, it better not be half a pound of lettuce. So just all about setting up vendors to make customers be happy with their products is definitely important.

One thing that I found really helpful is I created like a vendor orientation packet. And I did also share that on a Local Line webinar, and hopefully some work managers took that and ran with it. Basically, laying out every single detail of what a vendor can expect from participating

in the program and also some like tips and tricks for success. So uploading product pictures that are attractive and professional.

If you do happen to be out of an item one week, make it right with the customer, so give them something else, write them a handwritten note. And send them an email as well. So just to be really, I don't know, I guess it's mostly just like to be successful, especially in the hub model. Like you need your vendors on board. So yeah, my biggest suggestion to a market who is just starting out with this is get your vendors on board. Sell it to them. Sell it to them as we're going to do this work so you can make this money, but here's how you are successful.

And then I would say also like communication with customers is super important. The automatic emails that you can send out through Local Line is super important to keep your customers engaged. But also make those personal. Feature a different item each week, put a funny email title. Just anything you can do to like stand out from all the millions of emails customers get.

And I would also say Be creative in your like social media advertisement as well. And then I would just say the biggest suggestion is if something goes wrong, just make it right. Make it right times 10. If a vendor's out of snap peas, you then give that customer free snap peas and salsa and whatever. Just cause if your customers aren't happy, your vendors are not going to be happy because your customers aren't going to come back and buy more.

Diego Footer: [00:33:12] Right. So, say I'm a vendor, and I'm a vendor at your market. And, saying that Stephanie, you know, what are you guys doing or sounds interesting, but I don't know if I want to be a part of that. How would you pitch me to say, like to try and get me on board? Because it's beneficial for vendors I'm on the fence. What's the pitch?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:33:32] Yeah. So, for example, we have a sourdough bread vendor that I have been hounding to get on the online market and finally got them on two weeks ago after a year and a half. And I was like, Josh, it is so easy to do this program. You always have all of your flavors at the market of your bread. All you have to do is list them online, choose an inventory that feels right for you, just keep an eye on those sales. I know you'll have enough because you bake X amount for the market. This will help increase your sales at the market.

Our volunteer is going to come pick it up on Saturday, we're going to bring it to your customers. Our customers have been asking me for over a year and a half, "when is your bread going to be on the online market?" So like the customers want it. We're going to make it easy for you. And it's going to increase your sales. And that's mostly my pitch to hard-to-convince vendors. And I really haven't been unsuccessful.

Diego Footer: Did that Josh do it?

Stephanie Haynes: Josh did it. Josh is on there. It just took a year and a half, but he's on there last week. He sold like 30 loaves of bread. That's crazy. Some weeks, 10, some weeks.

Diego Footer: Just online?

Stephanie Haynes: Yeah, just online. At the market, he sold like, probably 200 loaves, but that extra 30 loves is really gonna bring up your sales for that weekend. And it's up and down, like sometimes our meat vendors they'll have \$700 one week and \$30 another week. Cause it is

just what people are ordering at the time, but always going to be more it's like, why not do it? Why not have this extra sales channel if it's not that much work for you?

Especially vendors who are already at the market, they don't really have to do a lot of extra work. So I think like pitching vendors, like it's not going to be a lot of work, and you're going to make money is like the number one thing.

And also like customers want—customers have asked me about you. That's like the other big thing I use, which is always true. Our customers are always emailing me, like, is this farm back for the year? Or are you going to have sourdough bread? Because they know they've been to the market before, they see online that another vendor's at the market, but not online, and they're upset about it. So I use that to tell vendors like, Hey, our customers have been asking you about you. Like, when are you going to get online? So.

Diego Footer: [00:36:07] Now, it's good. There's obviously a good side, 30 extra loaves of bread, \$700 in meat sales some weekends. That's all good. But you alluded to, Hey, this hasn't been always easy. There have been challenges along the way. What have been some of the biggest challenges since you implemented the online store for the market?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:36:31] Yeah. Some of the biggest challenges are, unfortunately, vendors. And vendors are at the center of everything that we do. And we're here to support vendors, but the vendors are also some of the biggest challenges. We have had a lot of instances where a vendor's going to be out of town, but they forgot to shut off their store for the week.

So then I have a customer, they're like, I can't get you two cases of kombucha because I'm at the coast, and I'm like, hmm. Okay. It was your responsibility to shut off your online store or let me know that you wouldn't be there, so that has been our biggest challenge. And like sometimes it's the vendor's fault and sometimes it's not. We had wildfires last year, and one of our farms had to completely evacuate and all of our online orders were already in for that week.

So I had to go back and refund every single carrot, lettuce, whatever else for that week and write handwritten notes to our customers saying this farm had to evacuate. Obviously, everyone was understanding, but it's just those unforeseen circumstances.

I would say the other challenge with this program is that just having the responsibility of storing the produce, like I alluded to before. One of our fridges, like totally went out last year, and we lost a lot of products. So having that responsibility transferred from the vendors to us has been a challenge, but we're definitely working on ways to address that, different containers. I check the fridges like before I leave to make sure they're still at temp. And we've just learned a lot.

One other challenge we've had is kind of a frustrating one. So we serve, EBT Snap customers. And though there's still not the ability for people to use their snap benefits online. This needs to be fixed, by the state, by the feds, like it needs to be fixed. Like, just in this day and age, like you should be able to use... Those benefits are already on a card, you should be able to use that card online.

And there are trials right now. In Washington state, but they're for like Amazon and Walmart, like people should be able to spend their benefits locally if that's what they want, so we have

to take those payments in person, which means that the person, the EBT customer who places the order doesn't have to put anything down to come. Whereas if you're paying with a credit card, you have to pay a hundred percent in advance, so obviously there's a lot of incentive to come pick up your order.

We have on occasion had an EBT customer who placed an order, but then didn't come pick it up. Didn't answer phone calls, didn't answer emails. And we have—obviously, the majority of our EBT customers would *never* do that, but a couple have. So in that case, the market has to cover the cost of that, which obviously as a small nonprofit who already lost a lot of money during 2020, it's hard for us to cover those costs, but obviously like we're also here to serve our EBT customers, and we would never not offer that, but that just is one thing that could be solved by having EBT payments go online. But it just hasn't, we just haven't gotten there yet, unfortunately. And this is my call to Washington state to figure that out.

Diego Footer: [00:40:16] Yeah, it's just...it's different, right? It's more management, and it's a different layer of management, but like any business that expands to offer more things, like there's always going to be stuff that comes with that. And it doesn't sound like it's been overwhelming.

So for just to close this interview out, do you have a final call out to a farmer's market manager out there who's on the fence about taking their market online? What would you want to say to them either directly or just about your experience offering your market, The Vancouver, Washington farmer's market, online?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:40:59] Yeah. I think I would just say that even though there have been ups and downs in this process and starting a new program from scratch is not easy, especially with limited time that market managers have, we still think it's a viable option and will kind of help keep us relevant in the world of grocery delivery.

Every grocery store offers curbside pick-up, there are numerous meal kit options to order online. And I just feel like it's important for farmer's markets to stay relevant and be in this world, this online grocery world, and just stay competitive. And I would also say that online markets do serve different customers, and they also serve your same customers in different ways.

So what I was alluding to before, not every family has time for the market every Saturday, every Sunday, every whatever day. So having the option to promote local food and local farms every day of the week is also really important, so I would say, go for it.

And definitely gather as much information as you can from other market managers who have done these programs in different ways across the country. There are just so many good examples, and there's so much to learn, and you're not doing it alone. You have this network of people who have done it before you. So yeah, I would just say, go for it. Get your vendors on board, then get your customers on board.

Diego Footer: [00:42:52] One last question, and you can—if you can share this, great. If you can't, you don't feel comfortable doing it. Are you okay saying how much sales you did online, and you don't have to give an exact number. You could say, Hey, we did over a hundred thousand or we did over X amount. Is that a number you could share just to help to see how big a potential this is?

Stephanie Haynes: [00:43:09] Yeah, yeah. So in 2020, we had 60 vendors, and we did over \$120,000 of sales. I don't have those numbers for 2021, so I'm not sure about that, but yeah, I think it was pretty significant for those who, yeah.

Diego Footer: [00:43:32] No, no, that's good. That's great. That's all we needed. And that's perfect. So this.

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